

THE PAST IS PRESENT: MEXICAN HISTORIOGRAPHIC METALITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

BRIAN THOMAS CHANDLER: The Past Is Present: Mexican Historiographic
Metaliterature
(Under the direction of Stuart A. Day)

This project explores the influence of the past in four works of contemporary Mexican literature: the novels Madero, el otro (1989) by Ignacio Solares and Noticias del Imperio (1987) by Fernando del Paso; and the plays Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda (1993) by Sabina Berman and La Malinche (2000) by Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda. Drawing on the works of poststructuralists like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Linda Hutcheon, essays by Mexican thinkers such as Carlos Fuentes, and theories of temporality posited by Paul Ricoeur and Jacques Le Goff, I demonstrate that, through the distortion and demythification of historical figures and events, these texts highlight the present-day influence of historical events and individuals beyond the causal characteristics assigned them by traditional historiography. This effect is used to communicate the active manner in which the isolated “past” is engaged with the present. The result is that cause and effect are reversed so that the reader is encouraged to engage in a dialectical process with the consequences of history in the present.

To Keri, you are my reason.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In Mexico, all times are living, all pasts are present. (Fuentes, New Time 16).

One of the must-see attractions for the first-time tourist to Mexico City is the Plaza de Las Tres Culturas, The Plaza of the Three Cultures, in the Tlatelolco district. With a slight amount of maneuvering for the perfect angle, tourists can take a snapshot that includes the excavated foundations of a Mexica (Aztec) pyramid, a colonial cathedral, and non-descript high-rise office buildings belonging to the Mexican government. Tour leaders and guidebooks seem to read from a script that can be paraphrased as such: the three cultures we see before us show the evolution of Mexico City: from pre-Columbian Mesoamerican to colonial Spanish and then, taking the best aspects of these two different worlds, a new mestizo culture and nation, that of contemporary Mexico. What can be lost among this architectural history lesson is that this plaza was also site to one of the most controversial events in post-revolutionary Mexico: the massacre of Tlatelolco in which hundreds of people were killed in a chaotic attempt by police to suppress student protests before the 1968 Olympic Games. The full scale of the massacre, well-documented in Elena Poniatowska's La noche de Tlatelolco (1975), was only recently officially recognized by a committee sanctioned by the Mexican congress in 1997. Interestingly, the only physical reminder of these events in

the plaza is a small monument, erected in the shadows of the imposing Cathedral of Santiago.

Having read Poniatowska's reconstruction of the massacre, during my first visit to the plaza I tried to imagine the horror of that night in 1968. Upon reflecting on the magnitude of what had taken place right where I was standing, I was struck by how this monument to one of the most pivotal events in recent Mexican history seemed utterly lost among the grandeur of the neighboring edifices constructed by the powerful throughout Mexican history. As on that day, I have often pondered how we, living in the present, understand our history and the past. It became obvious to me that the monument placed in memory of those who died on the second of October, 1968 would never be capable of fully capturing what happened that night nor its significance to present-day Mexicans. The monument will never tell the full story. Just as the "case" on this history was not "closed" by Poniatowska's now canonical work or the conclusions of the 1993 investigative committee, our understanding the massacre will never be complete. As long as there is a desire to understand the massacre, there will always be interplay between the perspective of the present and the events of the past.

The nature of the link between past and present is precisely what this study is about. How do we understand history? In particular, what is the role of literature in understanding the relationship between the past and the present? In this project, I show that these questions serve as a common theme in many works of Mexican literature. In particular, I examine how these themes are found and explored in four disparate works all written in the late 20th century: the novels Noticias del Imperio (1987) by Fernando del Paso and Madero, el otro (1989) by Ignacio Solares; and the plays Entre Villa y una

mujer desnuda (1993) by Sabina Berman and La Malinche (2000) by Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda. In analyzing the primary works of this study, I intend to demonstrate that through the distortion and demythification of historical figures and events, these texts highlight the present-day influence of historical events and individuals beyond the causal characteristics assigned them by traditional historiography. This effect is used to communicate the active manner in which the isolated “past” is engaged with the present. The result is that cause and effect are reversed so that the reader is encouraged to participate in a dialectical process with the consequences of history in the present.

While I will argue that these processes are not exclusive to any one culture, contemporary Mexico is the focus of this study. Mexican author Carlos Fuentes makes the case that contemporary Mexico is very much engaged with the past:

The greatness of Mexico is that its past is always alive. And not as a burden, except for the most primitive of modernizers. Memory saves it, filters, chooses, but it does not kill. Memory and desire both know there is no living present with a dead past and no future without both: a living present transformed into a living past. We remember here, today. We desire today, here. (New Time 216)

In contending this special connection between past and present in Mexico, Fuentes touches on the idea of a living past that operates in the present. Recently, this interaction between past and present has been an overt theme in much Latin American literature. Seymour Menton, Fernando Aínsa, and Juan José Barrientos have noted that since the late 1970s there has been a flourishing of a new category of novel in which historical personages are distorted and twisted, events are presented anachronically, and omissions and additions are offered to what, until the present, has been understood as historical fact. These works, classified as the New Historical Novel in Latin America, have engendered a

great number of studies and criticism of which the vast majority focus on two possible modes of interpretation:

1) The New Historical Novel contains a distorted version of the past and history as a thinly veiled allegory to critique and speak to the present social and political realities of Latin America.

2) The New Historical Novel offers an alternative version of historical events, highlighting the problematic nature of traditional historiography as employed within existing power systems.

I agree that criticism based on these two modes of interpretation is both useful and accurate. However, I also believe that many New Historical Novels offer the reader a third layer of meaning in addition to those outlined above. Furthermore, I contend that this category should be extended beyond the genre of the novel in order to include a wider variety of texts that share common characteristics. For this purpose, I propose the term “Historiographic Metaliterature,” defined as works of literature in which, through self-reflexivity of the epistemological and ontological aspects of discourse, historical personages and events are portrayed in a way that traditional historical knowledge is made subordinate to a creation *a sui generis* that communicates marginalized counter-hegemonic discourses. This definition is built upon the ideas of Fernando Aínsa, Juan José Barrientos, Linda Hutcheon, Santiago Juan-Navarro, Seymour Menton, and Alicia Rivero.

In Latin America’s New Historical Novel (1993), Seymour Menton posits that the first of Latin America’s New Historical Novels was Alejo Carpentier’s El reino de este mundo (1949). However, Menton notes that the “flourishing” of the New Historical

Novel does not truly begin until 1979, the year that Carpentier published El arpa y la sombra (14-15). Menton begins his book by contesting the observations of critics like Gutiérrez Mouat, who states that the Post-Boom novel “representa la ‘desliteraturización’ de la novela” ‘represents the ‘de-literaturization’ of the novel’ (8):¹

While some critics have prematurely hailed the demise of the ‘Boom’ novelists and have touted the emergence of a new generation of ‘post-Boom’ novelists, the empirical evidence suggests that since 1979 the dominant trend in Latin American fiction has been the proliferation of New Historical Novels, the most canonical of which share with the Boom novels of the 1960s moralistic scope, exuberant eroticism, and complex, neo-baroque (albeit less hermetic) structural and linguistic experimentation. (14)

Although it can be said that Menton is overstating the extent of the proliferation of the New Historical Novel in Latin American literary production, his work, and that of other scholars such as Fernando Aínsa and Juan José Barrientos, has established the importance of this type of novel within Latin American literary production of the last thirty years.

After identifying the existence of the New Historical Novel, Menton observes six characteristics that differentiate the New Historical Novel from the traditional historic novel:

1. The subordination, in varying degrees, of the mimetic recreation of a given historical period to the illustration of three philosophical ideas, popularized by Borges and applicable to all periods of the past, present, and future [. . .] (a) the impossibility of ascertaining the true nature of reality or history; (b) the cyclical nature of history; and (c) the unpredictability of history [. . .]
2. The conscious distortion of history through omissions, exaggerations, and anachronisms.
3. The utilization of famous historical characters as protagonists, which differs markedly from the Walter Scott formula—endorsed by Lukács—of fictitious protagonists [. . .]
4. Metafiction, or the narrator’s referring to the creative process of his own text [. . .]
5. Intertextuality [. . .]

¹ All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise indicated in the bibliography.

6. The Bakhtinian concepts of the dialogic, the carnivalesque, parody, and heteroglossia. (22-24; emphasis in original)

Menton's definition of the New Historical Novel is based solely on observed characteristics that attempt to create an articulated categorical description of works that share certain characteristics. However, as Menton himself notes, "all six [characteristics] are not necessarily found in each novel" (22). In a similar manner, Fernando Aínsa offers ten characteristics of the New Historical Novel in "La nueva novela histórica latinoamericana," published in 1991 in Plural. His description of this new category, like Menton's, is based on observed characteristics found in many contemporary novels.

In contrast with Menton and Aínsa who see the New Historical Novel as a definitive break with the tradition of the historical novel, Juan José Barrientos suggests that the New Historical Novel is a natural evolution of the historical novel that simply exhibits "tendencias que están renovando el género" 'tendencies that are renovating the genre' (13). These tendencies are a shifting of perspective from the third person to the first person perspective of the historical characters, an attempt to emphasize the interior feelings and thoughts of historical characters, a more intimate portrayal of historical personages, a decidedly subjective reconstruction of the past and irreverence toward past events and historical figures (Barrientos 13-20). The two primary novels that will be studied in this work can be classified as New Historical Novels according to the definitions offered by Menton, Aínsa, and Barrientos. I believe that Barrientos' approach is useful in that it does not include or exclude novels simply based on observed characteristics within a category. Nonetheless, all three definitions establish that there is indeed a new group of Latin American novels that share common characteristics worthy of further study.

It must be noted that Latin America's New Historical Novel is not an isolated phenomenon in Western literary production. In the field of Anglo-American criticism, Linda Hutcheon has noted, as a literary aesthetic manifestation of postmodernism, the emergence of "historiographic metafiction," which she defines as "well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages [. . .]" (Poetics 5).² While her definition of historiographic metafiction is too broad to be equated with the New Historical Novel, Hutcheon's insights into postmodern narrative in Western literature, including that of Latin America, will be fundamental in this project.

Building on the scholarship of Hutcheon, Santiago Juan-Navarro offers in his book, Archival Reflections, an Inter-American comparative study of historiographic metafiction, highlighting the commonalities between Anglo-American and Latin American postmodern fiction. Juan-Navarro begins his study by identifying dominant tendencies in the theory and practice of historiographic metafiction:

The discovery of significance in the marginal, the use of political philosophies that accommodate heterodoxy and dissent, the concept of literature as a communal experience open to the reader's participation, and the parodic rewriting of historical and literary traditions in order to demystify the dominant forms of representation. (12)

My definition is closely aligned to those of Hutcheon and Juan-Navarro with the exception that I have limited the category to those works in which historical personages

² The question of postmodernism in Latin America is essential to this project. I concur with Beverly and Oviedo who see the postmodern operating in Latin America in different ways from its Anglo-European manifestations. "The engagement with postmodernity in Latin America does not take place around the theme of the end of modernity that is so prominent in its Anglo-European manifestations; it concerns, rather, the complexity of Latin America's own 'uneven modernity' and the new developments of its hybrid (pre- and post-) modern cultures" (4).

and events are portrayed in a way that traditional historical knowledge is made subordinate to a creation *a sui generis*.

In a similar manner, Amalia Pulgarín analyzes novels that fall under the classification of the New Historical Novel as postulated by Menton. Pulgarín further highlights the connections between Anglo-American and European literature and literary theory and the New Historical novels by stating that

[L]o característico de estas novelas es su autoconciencia de las teorías del Nuevo Historicismo y el reconocimiento de la imposibilidad de representar la realidad. Los autores son conscientes de que tanto la narración histórica como la narración ficticia son construcciones o productos humanos y esta problemática la transportan a sus textos. Esta premisa, base del pensamiento histórico teórico moderno, constituye el fundamento de la elaboración y revisión de las formas y de los contenidos del pasado de los que se ocupa la novela. (14)

[w]hat is characteristic of these novels is their self-awareness of the theories of New Historicism and the recognition of the impossibility of representing reality. The authors are conscious that historic narrations, as well as fictive narration, are constructions or human products and this problematic is brought to their texts. This premise, the basis of modern theoretical historical thought, constitutes the foundation of the elaboration and revision of the forms and content of the past with which the novel is occupied.

Building upon this body of scholarship, Alicia Rivero has suggested that the category of historiographic metafiction, as defined by Hutcheon and Juan-Navarro, be extended to historiographic metaliterature, so as to include works with similar characteristics from other genres (Class Lecture). I believe that this expanded definition is necessary given the commonalities that can be found in works from genres beyond the novel. Furthermore, the ways in which history and the past are similarly explored and treated in both Mexican fiction and theater seem to suggest commonalities that transcend traditional generic boundaries.

In her study on memory and Latin American theater, Josette Féral observes that many contemporary works offer disparate—often conflicting—versions of history, memory, and representation:

Estas memorias múltiples, presentes en toda representación, se confrontan entre sí y establecen relaciones dialécticas, no solamente en el transcurso del trabajo preliminar que da origen al espectáculo, sino también durante la representación misma y la recepción del público. La memoria del teatro se sitúa entre lo subjetivo y lo colectivo, en el cruce de una fenomenología de la conciencia subjetiva y de una sociología de una memoria colectiva. (15)

These multiple memories, present in all representation, confront each other and establish dialectic relationships, not only in the course of the preliminary work that gives birth to the spectacle, but also during the representation [or performance] itself and the audience's reception of it. The memory of theater is situated between the subjective and the collective, in the intersection of a phenomenology of the subjective conscious and that of a sociology of a collective memory.

Féral's definition of the privileged position in which theater operates as a meaning-making art underscores the dialectic processes involved between subjective and collective memory. Although the process is actively dialectic, in much of contemporary theater synthesis is elusive and provisional in nature.

In a similar manner, Jeanette Malkin observes that works of contemporary historiographic theater “exhibit an exceptional preoccupation with questions of memory, both in terms of their thematic attention to remembered (or repressed) pasts, and in terms of the plays' ‘memoried’ structures: structures of repetition, conflation, regression, echoing, overlap, and simultaneity” (1; emphasis in original). That is to say that in these works memory is understood and portrayed as being manifold, highlighting its subjective and multiple nature. Nonetheless, the relationship between theater and contemporary understandings of memory does not necessarily inhibit agency and meaning-making as

the effectiveness of these works lies in the dialogues between audience, text, and heterogeneous memories. Malkin states that “[t]heater is the art of repetition, of memorized and reiterated texts and gestures. A temporal art, an art-through-time, theater also depends on the memorized attentiveness of its audience with whose memory (and memories) it is always in dialogue” (3). In order to further this dialogue, in many of these works “[n]arrative devices (flashbacks, realistic frames) are abandoned, as are appeals to a teleological understanding of the past” (Malkin 21). The result is that emphasis is shifted from finding some finality or resolution to the past to exploring how the past is filtered through a memory that is both subjective and incomplete.

In these works of historiographic metatheater, although the past is performed onstage, it is done in such a way that traditional notions of temporality are challenged. It must be stated that temporality has always been an essential element in theater. When the past is framed in a logical manner, the mimetic—albeit imperfect—quality of the work is maintained. Conversely, Freddie Rokem affirms that

history can be performed, in the world and on the theatrical stage too, when different structures of time (besides the daily reappearance of the sun), can be distinguished, making it possible to ask not only if the things that appear again are natural phenomena but if they are triggered by some kind of agency, creating a pattern, not just mechanical repetition. (xi)

However, when works of historiographic metatheater disrupt the illusion of naturalness of how the past is represented, attention is called not only to the problematic assumptions about the events and personages themselves but also to the very epistemological and ontological foundations on which historical knowledge is founded.

Just as historiographic metatheater is in many ways the product of an intellectual and cultural atmosphere that values distrust, Menton has established that the flourishing

of the New Historical Novel is, among other factors, a literary phenomenon partly born of the postmodern tendency to question history's claim to be a science privileged above other forms of discourse (31). Roland Barthes, in his essay "Discourse of History" (1963), argues that "the historian is not so much a collector of facts as a collector and relater of signifiers; that is to say, he organizes them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of the pure series" (138).

Building on the work of Barthes, Derrida, and others that posit the instability of the sign, Dominick LaCapra and Hayden White question historiography's truth claims given its status as a human discourse. In the post-structuralist and postmodern revaluing of historiography as a discourse, one can make the argument that fiction is just as valid as history to serve as a source of knowledge of the past. As Hutcheon states,

Historiographic Metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refutes the fact that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim of truth from that identity. (93)

However, it must be clarified that in works of historiographic metafiction, "[h]istory is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought—as a human construct. And in arguing that history does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality" (Hutcheon Poetics 16; emphasis in original). Furthermore, Hutcheon defends postmodern narrative against the critiques that it is devoid of agency and meaning, by stressing how knowledge can be obtained through intertextuality:

To say that the past is only *known* to us through textual traces is not, however, the same as saying that the past is only textual, as the semiotic idealism of some forms of poststructuralism seems to assert. This

ontological reduction is not the point of postmodernism: past events existed empirically, but in epistemological terms we can only know them today through texts. Past events are given meaning, not existence, by their representations in history. (*Poetics* 82-83; emphasis in original)

Hutcheon's attention to the necessary distinction between the meaning and the existence of past events is central to this project.

It can be concluded that works of Historiographic Metaliterature do not seek to question the existence or the reality of the past and historical events. As such, one must question why the New Historical Novel engages the past in a way not realized by its predecessors in the traditional historical novel. Carlos Fuentes observes that the phenomenon of the New Historical Novel in Latin America is “una afirmación del poder de la ficción para decir algo que pocos historiadores son capaces de formular: el pasado no ha concluido; el pasado tiene que ser re-inventado a cada momento para que no se nos fosilice entre las manos” ‘an affirmation of the power of fiction to say something few historians are capable of formulating: the past has not concluded; it has to be reinvented in every moment so that it does not fossilize in our very hands’ (*Valiente* 24).

By saying that the past has not concluded, Fuentes seems to be addressing how past events operate in the present. This relationship between past and present is one that must be mediated through discourse. Consequently,

[t]odo discurso histórico (historiográfico o ficcional) es, ante todo, memoria del pasado en el presente. A través del proceso de interacción y diálogo entre el presente y el pasado, en el “va y ven” de un tiempo al otro que toda narración histórica propicia, se establece una relación coherente entre ambos, un sentido histórico de pertenencia orgánica a un proceso colectivo, local, nacional o regional” (Aínsa *Reescribir* 67).

[a]ll historical discourse (historiographic or fictional) is, above all, memory of the past in the present. Through the process of interaction and dialogue between the present and past, in the “coming and going” from one time to another that all historical narration smoothes over, a coherent

relationship is established between the two, a historical sense of organic belonging to a regional, national, local, or collective process.

However, it must be stated that relationships constructed between past and present are not politically neutral. In the case of Mexico, representations and interpretations of the past have often been indistinguishable from the dominant political discourse given that

en nuestro país la reconstrucción del pasado se ha vinculado de tal modo a las grandes convulsiones políticas e ideológicas que atraviesan su historia, que cada proyecto político que se ha presentado a la nación ha tenido como correlato una nueva interpretación y reconstrucción del pasado. (Florescano Nuevo pasado 12).

in our country the reconstruction of the past has been connected in such a way to the great political and ideological upheavals that it has gone through that each political project that has been presented to the nation has correlatively had a new interpretation and reconstruction of the past.

Among authors, readers, playwrights, and audiences there is a growing awareness of the connections between politics and any understanding of the past. As a result, Historiographic Metaliterature explores and examines not only how history is known, but also the significance of the past in the present.

It is necessary to clarify that Historiographic Metaliterature does not propose to recuperate distant events separated by both time and space. Rather, it allows the reader to explore the ways in which history operates in the present. Recognizing the inadequacies of traditional historiography to capture what he terms as the “historicality” of everyday experience, Ranajit Guha states that “the historicality of the events and sentiments which inform the prose of the world remains unacknowledged” (73). One might argue that the idea of exploring “historicality,” the meaning and effects of past events, through fictive narrative is nothing new. However, according to Guha, the exploration of “historicality” is key in that it exposes how, in the Hegelian tradition of World-history, the “prose of the

world” has been placed in an inferior position to the “prose of history” (24-5). Showing that this phenomenon is relatively recent, commencing in enlightenment Europe, Guha underscores how this conception of history is not a universal category (25-26).

The role of literature in recuperating these lost historical discourses is central to Guha’s thesis. He is careful to point out that in the Western tradition of both story-telling and historiography, the verisimilitude of a text is based on temporal and spatial immediacy (63). In maintaining the appearance of immediacy of experience in historiography, the state is able to shield itself from the natural degradation of time (Guha 71). “It is thus that state and historiography came to form the strategic alliance known as World-history in order to overcome the negativity of time. The control of the past is essential to that strategy. Experience lends itself as a useful mechanism of control in this respect” (71). The institutionalization of such subjective knowledge in historiography is a dangerous exercise to which the New Historical Novel offers counter-knowledges that have been excluded by traditional historiography. In a similar manner, Fuentes suggests that artistic resistance to hegemonic historical knowledge opens up a space that offers more veracity through heterogeneity.

Los hombres y las mujeres oponemos demasiadas visiones, estéticas, eróticas, irracionales, a cualquier intento de armonización integral con el Estado, la corporación, la iglesia, el partido o aun, con la novia legítima de todas estas instituciones: <<La Historia>>. Creadores de otra historia, los artistas, sin embargo, están inmersos en esta historia. Entre ambas se crea la verdadera Historia, sin entrecomillado, que es siempre resultado de una experiencia y no de una ideología previa a los hechos. (Valiente 15; emphasis in original)

We men and women oppose too many esthetic, erotic, and irrational visions, we oppose any attempt at the integral harmonization with the State, the corporation, the church, the political party and even with the legitimate bride of all these institutions: “History.” Creators of another history, artists, nonetheless, are immersed in this history. Between the two

true History is created—without any quotation marks—that is always the result of an experience and not of a ideology that precedes events.

Although this hybrid “true History” can reduce many of the pitfalls inherent in relying solely on conventional historiography for our understanding of the past, it cannot be said that the writing, reading, and reception of Historiographic Metaliterature is an apolitical exercise.

Hutcheon’s claim that the postmodern is unavoidably political seems to be reinforced by the resistance to accepted forms of knowledge that can be found in the New Historical Novel (Politics 1). In exposing how the past operates in the present, these novels reveal what Michel Foucault would term “subjugated knowledges,” which “have been buried or masked in functional coherences and formal systematizations” (7). These subjugated knowledges are “blocks of historical knowledge that were present in the functional and systematic ensembles, but which were masked [. . .]” (7). By pointing out the processes of the subjugation of knowledges by the practice of traditional academic discourse, Foucault takes the bold step in valuing these genealogies as “antisciences”: “It is not that they demand the lyrical right to be ignorant, and not that they reject knowledge, or invoke or celebrate some immediate experience that has yet to be captured by knowledge. That is not what they are about. They are about the insurrection of knowledges” (9). This insurrection “enable[s] them to oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse” (10). The restoration and revelation of subjugated knowledges can be found in the space occupied by Historiographic Metaliterature, in which there is no attempt at recuperation of past events, but rather an attempt to describe how historical events and personages are

experienced in the present, revealing possible paths to bring such subjugated histories to light.

These processes can be clearly observed in del Paso's Noticias del imperio, the most well-known of the four primary texts to be studied in this work. The polyphonic narration of this novel is created through the stream-of-consciousness narration of the alienated Empress Carlota interspersed with dialogic voices from Europe and the land that Napoleon III tried to rule through his puppet, Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg. Throughout the work, the act of historical writing is brought to the forefront through numerous references to how history is written both within historiography and fictive literature.

The published research on this novel can be aligned into two groups. The first group, which includes Peter Thomas and Ruíz Rivas, seeks to suitably classify this novel within established literary modes. The second group, which includes Clark and González, Ibsen, Fell, and Larrave, all illustrate, from different perspectives, how Noticias del imperio problematizes the conventional categories of fiction and history. Elizabeth Corral Peña, in the most thorough study of the novel to date, offers an in-depth analysis of how, in Noticias del imperio, history and literature mix so as to question the truth-claims of either mode of discourse. Of greater importance to my project, Alexander Honold offers a connection between the theories of Walter Benjamin and del Paso's text, showing that they both support a historiography that is not based on temporal ruptures, but rather "un conjunto de capas históricas diversas, [una] coexistencia anacrónica de tiempos distintos dentro del mismo tiempo matemático y unidimensional"

‘an ensemble of diverse historic layers, [an] anachronic coexistence of distinct times within the same mathematical and unidimensional time’ (51-52).

In my analysis I will show how the long span of Carlota’s life (1840-1927) is used to disrupt the isolated way in which the events of France’s intervention in Mexico are usually framed. As Maximilian and Carlota become “Mexicanized,” Mexico, in a reciprocal manner, is once again engaged and changed by an imperial European power. The French conquest of Mexico will be shown to be not an isolated historical event, but rather a past event that continues to operate in contemporary Mexico. In particular, through the application of Paul Ricoeur’s phenomenology of time, I will show how the temporal aspect of the narration of this novel undermines the distance between historical events before, during, and after the life of Carlota. Interestingly, Noticias del Imperio brings to the forefront the connections between discourse and memory. Temporality as understood by the human agent is articulated in exaggerated form through Carlota’s expansive and schizophrenic monologue. In contrast to Carlota’s first person stream-of-conscious narration, the authorial voice reveals the process of writing history and fiction employed in works of historiographic metafiction. Adding to this polyphony are the voices of Mexicans and Europeans involved in some capacity with the French invasion of Mexico. Although all these voices speak within a conventional understanding of temporality, Carlota confuses the past, present, and future creating a world defined by illogical simultaneity. Consequently, the polyphonic narration of Noticias del imperio sheds light on to the way that history is understood from the perspective of the present.

Also foregrounding the problematic nature of temporality is Rascón Banda’s play La Malinche. In this work the spectator is presented with Hernán Cortés, Moctezuma,

Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Cuauhtémoc, and others, who are transported through time to present-day Mexico. In particular it is La Malinche, the translator to Cortés, who interacts with the Conquistadores, the Zapatistas, and legislators in Mexico's present-day congress. Whether as a representative in congress, an interpreter between the government and the Zapatistas, a news reporter, or as a tormented mother whose troubling relationship with her children forces her to visit a psychoanalyst, La Malinche's identity is constantly changing. The intertextual nature of the play is made clear given that many of the scenes are adapted from original sources that include náhuatl poetry, Díaz del Castillo's chronicles, popular songs, Paz's El laberinto de la soledad, among other texts.

Stuart A. Day notes that "[i]ronically, while Rascón Banda gives La Malinche a voice with which to vindicate herself, malinchismo is the defining concept of the play" (123). Furthermore, Day underscores how the play critiques the practice of malinchismo within the sociopolitical context of contemporary Mexican politics: "La Malinche stages an important part of relations between Mexico and the United States. Many Mexicans feel as though their country is continually being invaded (culturally and economically) and that treaties like NAFTA will always favor their neighbor to the North" (123).

Building upon Day's study, in this project I show how the historical and mythological personages of Mexico's past operate in the present in a very real way. Of particular interest is the way in which this process is brought to the foreground by the anachronistic placement of La Malinche, Cortés, and others in contemporary situations. Through these anachronisms, the reader/spectator is forced to engage and combat the manner in which these historical figures operate in the new realities of present-day

Mexico. These historical figures, and in particular that of La Malinche, cannot be understood as one pole within a system of binary opposites. Rather, they must be understood as complex identities that function in myriad ways in contemporary Mexico.

Another play that combines past and present, in Berman's Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda (1992) the relationships among four contemporary Mexicans are recreated with the twist that they share the space of the stage with the mythical Pancho Villa, whose comments and very life depend on the words and actions of the other four characters living in the present. Gina and Adrián, both middle-aged, have a relationship defined by a lack of commitment. However, when Gina pushes for a more solid commitment from her lover, a history professor and machista left-leaning intellectual, the relationship begins to collapse, but not before Gina helps to complete Adrián's manuscript on the history of Villa and the Mexican Revolution. As Gina empowers herself through discourse, Villa is riddled with bullets, highlighting the relationship between discourse, history, and power.

Sharon Magnarelli states that, through this play, Berman "provides an insightful analysis of the power of discursive practices and dramatizes how narrative (in the form of history, popular culture, or even the stories told us by others) author(ize)s the gender roles we cite and perform" (56). Magnarelli, by studying the roles of desire and discourse in gender performance, offers a perceptive entry for further analysis of the work. Priscilla Meléndez notes that, in Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, Sabina Berman "se atreve a atagonizar y parodiar dos metas claves de la historia política, económica y cultural de Hispanoamérica en general y de México en particular: el deseo revolucionario y el ansia de la modernidad" 'dares to antagonize and parody two key goals of the

cultural, economic, and political history of Spanish America in general and of Mexico in particular: revolutionary desire and anxiety provoked by modernity' (525). In his analysis of the play, Day contextualizes the work within the economic and political climate of neoliberalism in which it was created and received. "In Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda [. . .], Sabina Berman responds to this relatively new, ambiguous political climate in Mexico and the need for the left to move forward by forming new political alliances" (37).

In my analysis of this play, I build upon the research stated above in order to show how conventional historiography has helped to isolate historic figures and revolutionary rhetoric in a mythological past. In spite of this temporal distancing, it can be observed that the past is very much engaged directly with the present. Furthermore, I show that the present-day influence of Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution must be recognized in order to combat hegemonic discourses that have real consequences in contemporary Mexico. The Villa that serves as a menace to Adrián is a citational myth, built of multiple texts and proliferated by a misogynic discourse that ties machismo with nation. It will be shown that there is indeed agency to contest the dominant sociopolitical discourses in Mexico. The first step in this counter-hegemonic politics is to establish the historicity of the present and the ways that we continually invest power in historical events and personages.

While simultaneity of past and present permits the plot of Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda to unfold, in Solares' Madero, el otro time is almost stopped as Francisco Madero (1873-1913) is challenged to contemplate his life by an omniscient narrator who asks the dying president to cast his gaze into a mirror where past and future events

transcend spatiotemporal restraints. The rigorous reconstruction of Madero, supported with a bibliography at the end of the novel, attempts to capture “el halo que dejan los hechos, más que los hechos mismos” ‘the aura that the events leave behind, rather than the events themselves’ (250). The narrator(s), who may or may not be part of Madero’s conscious, interchangeably use(s) the pronouns “tú,” “yo,” “nosotros” [you, I, we], to constantly remind his interlocutor of the interconnectivity between Madero (the mystic), el otro Madero (the politician who must make pragmatic decisions), the narrator himself, the reader, and the Mexican people.

In his article on Madero, el otro, Weatherford suggests that this novel is “a case study in reader-response theory” and the role of texts in identity formation (88). In their articles, Martínez and Camps both show how this novel reflects a postmodern understanding of history as discourse and suggest that the problematic portrayal of Madero highlights the weaknesses of conventional historiography. In my analysis of this novel, it will be shown that Madero, el otro captures the way Madero’s life and the Mexican Revolution have active influence over contemporary Mexico. Of particular interest is the way in which the protagonist Madero is forced to look into a mirror in order to contemplate his life. In this mirror, the past, present, and future mix, showing the disastrous results of Madero’s well-intentioned policies and beliefs. In this study, it will be shown that the space of the mirror in the novel is a representation of the way in which temporal distance is made subordinate to the present-day experience of Madero’s every decision.

Interestingly, in Madero, el otro it is shown that the past is never directly accessible to us. Rather, it is recreated through a process that selects and discards

information in order to form a coherent narration. With an awareness of the discursive nature of both historiography and fiction, the authorial voice suggests that truth lies in the space between what has been established as fact and what can be imagined as fiction. As a result, Madero's identity—like those of all historical figures—is in a constant state of flux, changing the present's active perception of the past. Consequently, the influence of past events and personages is also instable and evolving, maintaining the dynamic ties between past and present.

In the conclusions section of this work, I discuss how these primary works share many common characteristics while approaching the past and the present from very different perspectives. While each novel or play has its individual value, another layer of meaning can be extracted when these works are studied as part of a growing movement to reconsider the relationships between past, present, and future. Moreover, it will be shown that while Mexico is the focus of this project, the presence of the past is a concept that can be extended to other social and national contexts.

As stated before, this study is concerned with the meaning that past events acquire in the present. Furthermore, it must be clarified that in this project a distinction is being made between agents in the present assigning meaning to the past and the past as an active element in the present. I believe that the dialectical relationship between these two concepts is the space in which Historiographic Metaliterature finds resonance. It is my opinion that this dialectic exploration is highly political in nature. As a consequence, its manifestation in Historiographic Metaliterature is worthy of further study. It is my hope that this project will offer further understanding of this emerging category of Latin American literature.

CHAPTER 2

Carlota's Eternal Present: Noticias del Imperio

All history is contemporary insofar as the past is grasped in the present, and thus responds to the latter's interests. This is not only inevitable but legitimate. Since history is lived time (*durée*), the past is both past and present. (Le Goff 130)

El tiempo es el depositario del sentido.
(Paz Signo 11)
Time is the repository of meaning.

Fernando del Paso's Noticias del Imperio (*News from the Empire*) (1987) is the best known and most analyzed primary work in this study. Through a striking example of neobaroque complexity and playfulness, Noticias del Imperio offers the reader a new glimpse into the events before, during, and after the French-led Second Mexican Empire under the Hapsburg Archduke Maximilian of Austria and his wife Carlota. In this novel, the act of historical writing is brought to the forefront through numerous references to the way history is written both within historiography and fictive literature. The diegesis of the novel unfolds through the stream-of-consciousness narration of the alienated and mentally ill Empress Carlota, interspersed with a third-person retelling of various events involving the French intervention and an authorial voice that interrupts, ponders, and critiques the grand undertaking that is this novel.

While the emphasis of Noticias del Imperio seems to be a reinterpretation of past events, both real and fictitious, there is another level of meaning in the novel put forward

by the way in which Carlota's narration unfolds. While the long span of Carlota's life (1840-1927) serves as the thematic bond that holds disparate events and periods together, it also highlights and disrupts the isolated way that the events of France's military and political involvement in Mexico are usually framed. As Maximilian and Carlota become "Mexicanized," Mexico, in a reciprocal manner, is once again engaged and changed by an imperial European power. In my analysis of this novel, the French intervention in Mexico (1861-67) will be shown to be not an isolated historical event, but rather a past event that continues to operate in contemporary Mexico. In particular, I will show how the temporal aspect of the narration of this novel undermines the distance between historical events before, during, and after the life of Carlota. Consequently, this novel reflects the way history is experienced in present-day Mexico.

Described by the author as an "especie de carrera entre la imaginación y la documentación" 'a kind of race between imagination and documentation' (Barrientos 'La locura' 31), del Paso's novel has been hailed by critics and readers alike for its complexity and innovation. As if to underscore the novel's merits, a short five years after its publication, Seymour Menton called for its "canonización inmediata" 'immediate canonization' ("Fuentes, del Paso, Taibo II" 111). Similar to Menton's studies of the New Historical Novel, the majority of the published analyses of this novel focus on how it problematizes the conventional categories of fiction and history. Indicative of much of the research on Noticias del Imperio, Elizabeth Corral Peña, in the most thorough study of the novel to date, offers an in-depth analysis of the way history and literature mix so as to question the truth-claims of either mode of discourse.

While Noticias del Imperio provides a seemingly endless source of material to be examined and analyzed more in depth, this study will focus on the concept of temporality in the novel. In his article on Noticias del Imperio, Alexander Honold notes that del Paso's text supports a historiography that is not based on temporal ruptures, but rather "un conjunto de capas históricas diversas, a la coexistencia anacrónica de tiempos distintos dentro del mismo tiempo matemático y unidimensional" 'an ensemble of diverse historical layers within a single mathematical and one-dimensional time' (51-52). Honold's argument highlights the revealing nature of temporality rendered in Noticias del Imperio. In particular, the first-person narration of Carlota, speaking in 1927 from the Bouchout Castle in Belgium, links past with present, Europe with Mexico, and history with fiction.

The organization of the novel offers a glimpse into the constant dialogue between past and present. The twenty-three chapters switch between a polyphonic retelling of the events surrounding the French intervention in the even-numbered chapters and Carlota's monologue in the odd-numbered chapters. The even-numbered chapters contain myriad voices expressed through chronologically ordered sections with names such as "Crónicas de la corte" 'Chronicles of the Court,' "De la correspondencia—incompleta—entre dos hermanos" 'On the correspondence—incomplete—between two brothers,' and "Camarón, Camarón" 'Little Shrimp, Little Shrimp.' This heteroglossia is contrasted with the ranting monologues of the mentally ill eighty-six year old Carlota. Elizabeth Corral Peña describes this monologue as a soliloquy, in which

[se] mezcla una enorme cantidad de datos históricos—de su vida, de aquellos a quienes conoció, de la historia de Europa—con preocupaciones existenciales, tales como el sentido de la vida, el sinsentido del mundo y

de las acciones de los hombres, precariedad del sujeto, la desgracia y la deshonra, la libertad rota, la impotencia. (“La verdad” 117-18)

an enormous amount of pieces of historical information—about her life, about those she knew, about the history of Europe—are mixed with existential preoccupations such as the meaning of life, the absurdity of the world and the actions of men, the precariousness of the subject, disgrace and dishonor, broken liberty, and impotence.

In the wide-ranging thoughts of Carlota, the reader finds a woman who is alone, wanting to return to Mexico and reclaim the throne for both her and her husband, Maximilian. In addition to an interesting rewriting of the once empress of Mexico, the reader is treated to a fascinating look at memory, narration, and temporality and all the ways in which these three concepts function.

When speaking of temporality in Noticias del Imperio, I am not referring to objective cosmic time as understood by an astrophysicist, but rather what Paul Ricoeur calls “human time,” that is, time as experienced by the human being, “which always requires a reference point of a present [. . .]” (Volume 1 224). Ricoeur’s understanding of human time is based on a phenomenology of time-consciousness, the way in which the conscious perceives its embodiment, place, and time within the world (Dauenhauer). For Carlota in Noticias del imperio, the reference point of the present in the novel is the year 1927. However, there are at least two narrative presents in Noticias del Imperio: that of Carlota and that of the authorial voice, which is manifested through ample usage of metafictional comments about the text with which the reader is engaged.

Interestingly, Noticias del Imperio brings to the forefront the connections between discourse and memory. For Ricoeur, discourse, that is to say language employed by an interlocutor, “refers to a world that it claims to describe, to express, or to represent” (Text 145). Ricoeur posits that the narrative mode of discourse is essential to expressing an

agent's understanding of its spatiotemporal existence in the world, given that "time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (Vol. 1 52). The processes involved in articulating human time are made more acutely discernable by Carlota's monologue—and also, some would argue, by her insanity. Nonetheless, the authorial voice present in Noticias del Imperio also lays bare the process of narration and how it affects the ways temporality is perceived by the embodied human consciousness.

Carlota seems to understand this correlation, fusing together her embodied memories to a continual present. Comparing herself to the mythological figure of the Phoenix, continuing a cycle of destruction and rebirth, Carlota says, "yo soy una memoria viva y temblorosa, una memoria incendiada, vuelta llamas, que se alimenta y se abrasa a sí misma y se consume y vuelve a nacer y abrir las alas" 'I am a tremulous and living memory, a memory set aflame, burning, that fuels and burns and consumes itself and is born again and opens its wings anew' (657). Her memories are created, recreated, morphed, distorted, and destroyed in a process to continually understand her place in the world and history.

The novel opens with the first-person narration of Carlota explaining who she is, enumerating all of the titles and names by which believes she is known. With the words "Yo soy," Carlota sets forth the neobaroque diegesis of the novel with what Peter Thomas calls a "first-person onomastic catalogue [that] serves as a good initial example of Noticias del Imperio as a Rabelaisian 'carnavalesque game of names'" (174). The usage of the first-person of the present tense of the verb of the verb ser, to be in English, highlights Carlota's understanding of her place in the present. Stating, "Yo soy María

Carlota de Bélgica, Empeatriz de México y de América” ‘I am Marie Charlotte of Belgium, Empress of Mexico and America’ (13), Carlota’s monologue begins by faithfully reproducing what has been documented as Carlota’s belief that she would return to Mexico and continue her reign as empress (Haslip 505). Juxtaposed with reproductions that are faithful to established historiographic knowledge are Carlota’s more historically polemical statements, such as, “Yo soy [. . .] Regente de Anáhuac, Reina de Nicaragua, Baronesa del Mato Grosso, Princesa de Chichén Itzá” ‘I am [. . .] Regent of Anáhuac [the Valley of Mexico], Queen of Nicaragua, Baroness of Mato Grosso [Brazil], Princess of Chichén Itzá’ (13). She even goes as far as to call her husband “Emperador de México y Rey del Mundo” ‘Emperor of Mexico and King of the World’ (13). These megalomaniacal statements are given amidst lists of European royal lineages and the historical events surrounding ascensions and coronations.

This opening monologue establishes both Carlota’s worldview and her temporal placement according to her perception. In her mind, she is living an eternal present in which past events, both real and imagined, are made present in contrast to her frail embodied reality in a Belgian castle years after her husband’s death. At times she speaks with Maximilian, her “pobre Max” ‘poor Max,’ recognizing that he is indeed dead. In other moments she speaks to him as though he were alive. Admitting her difficulty grasping what is real and unreal, Carlota states:

me di cuenta que no sabría en cuál tiempo verbal contarlos, porque estoy tan confundida que a veces no sé si fui de verdad María Carlota de Bélgica, si soy aún Empeatriz de México, si seré algún día Empeatriz de América. Y porque estoy tan confundida que a veces no sé dónde termina la verdad de mis sueños y comienzan las mentiras de mi vida. (23)

I realized that I would not know in which verb tense to tell them, because I am so confused that at times I do not know if I really was María Carlota of

Belgium, if I am still the Empress of Mexico, if I will be one day Empress of America. And because I am so confused at times I do not know where the truth of my dreams ends and where the lies of my life begin.

Carlota's apparent self-awareness of her own confusion and struggle against forgetting the past becomes a leitmotiv throughout her monologue. Similarly, she is very much aware that her husband, Maximilian, is dead, yet she repeatedly calls him to action in the present. With rancor she questions her husband, "Dime, Maximiliano, ¿qué has hecho tú de tu vida desde que moriste en Querétaro como un héroe y como un perro, pidiéndole [sic] a tus asesinos que apuntaran al pecho y gritando Viva México [. . .]" "Tell me, Maximilian, what have you done with your life since you died in Querétaro like a hero and a dog, shouting Viva Mexico while asking your murderers to aim for your chest" (21). While Carlota's understanding of the present and the past offers contradictory messages, this is her way of understanding the moment in which she lives.

Playing with verb tenses, the inflection that allows one to express temporality through action, Carlota asks Maximiliano:

¿Cómo explicarle a nuestro maestro de español, que además se murió hace tantos años, cómo decirle que de nada sirve que me hable de conjugaciones y tiempos verbales porque yo no fui la Emperatriz de México, yo no seré Carlota Amelia, yo no sería la Reina de América sino que soy todo todo el tiempo, un presente eterno sin fin y sin principio, la memoria viva de un siglo congelado en un instante? (362)

How do I explain to our Spanish teacher, who died so many years ago, how do I tell him that it does me no good to speak of conjugations and verbal tenses because I was not the Empress of Mexico, I will not be Carlota Amelia, I would not be the Queen of America but rather I am all all the time, an eternal present without end and without beginning, the living memory of a century frozen in an instant?

This fragment encapsulates and helps explain the way in which Carlota operates in the present. Seeing herself as a "living memory," a phrase repeated various times in the

novel, Carlota connects the 19th and 20th centuries. Furthermore, in her worldview the past, present, and future lose their temporal underpinnings. Given the freedom to roam the past and present, to bring alive those long dead, Carlota challenges what the reader would accept as historical fact.

According to Corral-Peña, Carlota can “temporalmente disminuir, e incluso anular, el valor y el peso de la historia, de cualquier juicio monológico oficial [. . .] para después construir un universo propio donde las cosas son como ella quiere o como hubieran debido ser” ‘temporarily reduce, and even annul, the value and weight of history or of any official monologic judgement [. . .] to later construct a personal universe where things are as she wants or as how they should have been’ (*Noticias* 197). This subordination of objective time to a totally personal narrated time serves to make more subjective the meaning of the events surrounding her life and, in particular, the ephemeral Second Empire of Mexico.

Noting the historical liberties taken in works of postmodern historical novels, Elisabeth Wessling states:

Whereas traditional historical fiction tends to obey the rule that the novelist may only speak when the historian falls silent, filling in gaps in the historical records without contradicting known facts, postmodernist novelists blatantly negate established historical facts through conspicuous anachronisms, divergences from official chronology and the like. (203)

These novels—as can be observed in *Noticias del imperio*—flaunt their counterfactual claims while questioning the ability of conventional historiography and works of literature to accurately reconstruct the past. Wessling draws attention to this distinction between traditional and postmodern historical fiction.

Contrary to conventional historical fiction, which contents itself with fleshing out the bare skeleton of established historical facts, alternative

histories drastically reshape this basic framework itself. Changes are wrought upon canonized history by effecting shifts among the various factors that played a role in a given historical situation or series of events. (205)

In Noticias del imperio the narrative process is flaunted by the interruption of the authorial voice that reminds the reader that what she is reading is a discursive artifact. Patricia Waugh observes that “[c]ontemporary metafiction draws attention to the fact that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins” (29). The destabilization of the frames that traditionally have separated historical veracity from artistic creation is ever-present in Noticias del imperio.

Highlighting the unstable foundations of canonical historical knowledge, Carlota’s reality in the novel is one in which all frames are blurred. In this world, fact is confused with fiction, the past mixes with the present, and reality is the product of the protagonist’s imagination. Seemingly, the only connection Carlota has with the world outside of her disordered mind is the frequent visits from a messenger who brings with him news from the Empire. In different moments the messenger arrives dressed as Pope Pius IX, the Archangel Michael, Benito Juárez, princes, and military leaders from the past telling her stories and updating her on the goings on in Europe and Mexico. It is through this messenger that she learns of modern inventions such as the telephone, the automobile, the motion picture, and the airplane. While this messenger seems to inform her of the flowing of time, it is still time as perceived by Carlota.³ As Carlos Fuentes

³ The political and technological changes during the long span of Carlota’s life would have surely had a profound impact on her worldview. In particular, with new technologies our conceptualization of time is altered. Jeremy Stein observes: “Social scientists have long been aware of the significance of developments in transport and communication for the reorientation of temporal and spatial relationships between places (Janelle, 1968; Falk and Abler, 1980). The concepts ‘time-space convergence’ and ‘time-

reminds us, “[t]he pure version of time is a time without humanity. Diversion, reversion, inversion, subversion of time are the human responses, the stain—la mancha—of time” (New Time 15). Highlighting this understanding of temporality, Carlota declares to her imaginary interlocutor, Maximilian, that “cuando llega el último día, el día de tu muerte, todos los días de tu vida se vuelven uno solo. Y resulta entonces que tú, que todos, hemos estado muertos desde siempre” ‘when the last day arrives, the day of your death, all the days of your life become one. And then it turns out that you, like everyone, has been dead forever’ (19). This conceptualization of collapsing time once again underscores that Carlota’s—and indeed all agents’—temporality is not a metaphysical objective time, but rather time as perceived by an actor operating in a world that it tries to understand and express.

In another example of how Carlota perceives and orders the outside world in ways that conflict with the changes around her, she orders that all the clocks in the castle be stopped forever at seven in the morning, because as Carlota explains to Maximiliano, it is “la hora en que esos bandidos acabaron con tu vida en el Cerro de las Campanas” ‘the hour in which those bandits ended your life on the Hill of the Bells’ (236). The interplay between Carlota’s efforts to stop time and her struggles to come to terms with the reality that surrounds her forces Carlota to reinterpret constantly the past and present.

Sequestered in her castle, Carlota’s link to the contemporary world is kept alive by the visits of the costumed messenger bringing news from the Empire. Interestingly,

space compression’ were developed by geographers to describe the cumulative effects of historical improvements in the speed of movement of goods, services and information. The former concept refers to the increased velocity of circulation of goods, people and information, and the consequent reduction in relative distances between places. The latter concept describes the sense of shock and disorientation such experiences produce” (106).

the leitmotiv of the masquerade is brought to the forefront earlier in the work, as Europe's power players plot their future intervention in Mesoamerica behind masks and costumes representing various personages from different stages of history. A third-person narrator describing the masquerade ball states, "Estaba allí todo el mundo. Estaban, también, todos los siglos" 'All the people were there. All the centuries were there as well' (48). The play on the idea of all centuries present, in the costumes and as history being made manifest, shows how the idea of Maximilian and Carlota's reign carried with it centuries of conquests, power struggles, philosophical and historical justifications, and political opportunism; in short, the history of all the centuries before. Interestingly, the episode of the masquerade ball metonymically subverts identities and times as can be seen throughout the novel.

As one more character in this seductive game of identities, the messenger and his interactions with Carlota connect fantasy with reality. Furthermore, Carlota morphs the messenger and what exactly it is that he brings her. Obsessed with the idea of Maximilian's dismembered body, Carlota speaks repeatedly of recomposing her dead husband throughout the novel. In one instance, the messenger brings Carlota some parts of Maximilian's body. Describing the event to her deceased interlocutor, Carlota portrays the objects and their presentation as if they were medieval religious relics, saying that "[a]yer vino a verme el mensajero del Imperio y me trajo, en un estuche de terciopelo, tu lengua. Y en una caja de cristal, tus dos ojos azules. Con tu lengua y con tus ojos, tú y yo vamos a inventar de nuevo la historia" '[y]esterday the messenger from the Empire came to see me and he brought me, in a velvet case, your tongue. And in a crystal box, your two blue eyes. With your tongue and with your eyes, you and I are

going to reinvent history' (76). Carlota's reinvention of her husband and of history mirrors the processes at work throughout the novel, uniting disparate themes and pasts in order to present a unified—if schizophrenic—present.

Kristen Ibsen argues that Carlota “procura reinventar a su marido muerto hilando pedazos de su historia, el propósito discursivo de Carlota, y de la novela, es recrear una totalidad a través de una síntesis imaginativa de las partes” ‘strives to reinvent her dead husband threading pieces of their history, the discursive purpose of Carlota, and of the novel, is to recreate a totality through an imaginative synthesis of various parts’ (102). By synthesizing parts to create a new whole with new meanings, Carlota breathes life into Maximilian and Mexican history, continually reviving them in the present. Aware of the power of her discourse, Carlota asks, “¿Y sabes a lo que más le tienen miedo, Maximiliano? A que te invente a ti de nuevo” ‘And do you know what their most afraid of, Maximilian? That I reinvent you anew’ (77). Furthermore, she is cognizant of the fact that as a “fantasma que vaga por los corredores del Hofburgo [. . .] y por las terrazas del Alcázar de Chapultepec” ‘ghost that roams the hallways of the Hofburgo [. . .] and around the terraces of the Castle of Chapultepec,’ Maximilian’s presence is felt in the present. However, according to Carlota, their biggest fear is that she “de ese espectro haga yo un príncipe más alto aún que fuiste en vida, más alto que tu tragedia y que tu sangre” ‘from that ghost make a higher prince than you were in life, higher than your tragedy and your blood’ (77). Even as those around her want her to bury the past and allow old ghosts to rest, Carlota is incapable of removing herself from the ways in which the past still functions in the present. As she herself says, “Tú vuelves a vivir cada vez que te nombro, cada vez que digo tu nombre” ‘You come back to life every time I name

you, every time that I say your name' (312). However, in order to bring her husband back to life, Carlota must find a means beyond simply combining the elements of Maximilian's body while speaking his name. The ways in which she combines, changes, and revives those relegated to the past reinforces the idea of the subjective temporality as perceived by the human conscious.

The distinction between how the past is perceived by the embodied conscious and traditional historiography can be observed in the episode in which the messenger is transformed into Benito Juárez. Carlota relays the encounter to her husband, stating "[m]e desnudé, Maximiliano, delante de Juárez, pero no para entregarme a él, sino para escribir, con mi piel y sobre mi piel y con la sangre de ellos y de México, nuestra historia" 'I undressed myself, Maximilian, in front of Juárez, but not to give myself to him, but rather to write, with my skin and on my skin and with the blood of them and of Mexico, our history' (608). This interaction between Carlota and the morphing messenger draws attention to how in understanding and writing history it is impossible to completely separate the subjective from the objective, the personal from the private. As Hutcheon reminds us, "[t]o elevate 'private experience to public consciousness' in postmodern historiographic metafiction is not really to expand the subjective; it is to render inextricable the public and historical and the private and biographical" (Poetics 94). It can be said that Carlota's history is much more subjective than objective, but it is still a history. This exaggerated example of how history is understood by the individual is obviously much different from the work of a historian or even that of the writer of historiographic literature. Nonetheless, through its exuberance and excess, it brings to

the foreground the very processes that we perform as we try to make sense of and engage the past.

Carlota continues to explain her encounter with the messenger as Benito Juárez by focusing on the blood of all the Mexicans lost in the battles fought during the French intervention stating that “con esa sangre me tatué todo el cuerpo, y es allí, en mi piel, donde todo quedó escrito y no en las hojas, en las miles de hojas que arranqué de mis cuadernos” ‘with that blood I tattooed all my body, and it is there, on my skin, where everything was written and not on the pages, the thousands of pages that I ripped out of my notebooks’ (608). Feeling a mixture of culpability and defiance for the responsibility of the blood shed during the imperial exercise, Carlota begins to understand the futility of writing to capture fully how the past operates within her present. For the former empress, the past has become overwhelming; she is incapable of any total comprehension. As Carlos Fuentes states, “[t]he fact is, the time of Mexico reaches us charged with all that we could become, but the charge precedes us and is so enormous that at moments we would like to become pure time, so as to defeat the historical time that denies, mocks, defies, and besieges us” (New Time 21). The primary means of documenting and exploring historical time is through the practices of historiography. However as Carlota explains, the pages, the documents, and the first-person accounts of a witness at the center of such a unique moment in Mexican history are not capable of describing the reality as experienced by the human conscious.

Confusing spatiotemporal aspects of the past, juxtaposing disparate personages and events of Mexico’s long history, Carlota declares:

Yo soy Mamá Carlota, madre de Cuauhtémoc y La Malinche, de Manuel Hidalgo y Benito Juárez, de Sor Juana y de Emiliano Zapata. Porque soy

tan Mexicana, ya te lo dije, Maximiliano, como todos ellos [. . .] Y soy la madre de todos ellos porque yo, Maximiliano, soy su historia y estoy loca. (664-65)

I am Mama Carlota, mother of Cuauhtémoc and La Malinche, of Manuel Hidalgo and Benito Juárez, of Sor Juana and Emiliano Zapata. Because I am as Mexican, like I told you before, Maximilian, as Mexican as all of them [. . .] I am the mother of all of them because I, Maximilian, am their history and I am crazy.

Carlota's claim to be just as Mexican as these famous personages is in many ways historically accurate. Apart from her documented desire to learn Spanish, travel the land, and get to know better her "subjects," Carlota and Maximilian have indeed formed part of the national dialogue on Mexican history. Nonetheless, she was always an outsider; placed on the throne alongside her husband, to rule a land they had never seen prior to disembarking at the port of Veracruz to be crowned Emperor and Empress. Interestingly, the very processes at hand that placed the couple in the seat of power reflected the constant interaction of the histories of an arrogant European colonization that manipulates preexistent social and religious belief systems.

The subject of Hernán Cortés's military and political maneuvering to seize power from the dominant Mesoamerican civilizations during the Spanish Conquest is employed in various times in the novel. In one particular instance, Benito Juárez is contemplating the physical appearance of Maximiliano, incessantly asking his secretary of state about the lightness of the European's skin and the length of his beard. Furthermore, the indigenous Juárez points out the parallels of this particular power grab by Europeans with one that occurred in Mesoamerica over three hundred years before:

Le decía para colmo, nos quieren imponer un dizque Emperador, que tiene lo que aquí mucha gente considera bonito, como el color de la piel, blanca, o de los ojos, azules, y usted no debe olvidar, Señor Secretario, que vivimos en un país cuya mitología el dios benefactor, podríamos decir el

dios máximo, es un dios blanco, alto y rubio, que prometió volver un día.
(151)

I was telling you that it is the limit that they want to impose on us a so-called Emperor, that has what many people here consider to be beautiful attributes, like the color of his skin, white, or of his eyes, blue, and you should not forget, Mr. Secretary, that we live in a country in whose mythology the beneficent god, who we could say is the highest god, is a white god, tall and blond, that promised to return one day.

The eternal return of the outside usurper that Juárez perceives is paradoxically rational and irrational. The times are different and as the president himself recognizes, “[s]i el Archiduque llega a poner un pie en México, muy pronto se darán cuenta que no es un dios ni nada que se le parezca” ‘if the Archduke puts one foot in Mexico, they will quickly realize that he is not a god or anything close to one’ (152). Nonetheless, Juárez’s understanding of history is one in which the possibilities for the present and future are built from experiences and memories, both individual and collective.

As Carlos Fuentes notes, “el pasado depende de nuestro recuerdo aquí y ahora, y el futuro de nuestro deseo, aquí y ahora. Memoria y deseo son imaginación presente” ‘the past depends on our memory here and now, and the future on our desire here and now. Memory and desire are the present imagination’ (Valiente 48). Imagination is one of the elements through which Juárez contemplates the future but also understands the present. What Juárez does in his explorations of the past is not dissimilar to Carlota’s reordering and juxtapositions that are made at the cost of logic. For Juárez, the connections are clear between a sixteenth-century Machiavellian Spanish soldier and a nineteenth-century reluctant Austrian archduke seemingly more interested in entomology than in ruling a foreign land. In exploring the connections between history and memory, Jacques LeGoff asserts that “there are [. . .] at least two histories: that of collective

memory and that of historians. The first appears as essentially mythic, deformed, and anachronistic. But it constitutes the lived reality of the never-completed relation between present and past” (111). The personal history to which the reader is exposed in Carlota’s monologue is an extreme, but no less unreal, example of how the human conscious tries to make sense of the past in a present that at times becomes incomprehensible.

Obviously, this personal history cannot be seen as complete or scientific. What, then, is the role personal history plays in historiography and the ways in which we understand the past? This is where the authorial voice in Noticias del Imperio offers perspective on the function of imagination, documentation, historiography, and fictional literature in understanding the past and the present. Speaking of the idea of history as judge of Carlota and Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire, the authorial voice comments not only on the particulars of the novel the reader holds in her hands, but also on the general processes of writing and understanding history:

Pero la última página sobre el Imperio y los Emperadores de México, la que idealmente contendría ese <<Juicio de la Historia>>—con mayúsculas—del que hablaba Benito Juárez, jamás sería escrita y no sólo porque la locura de la historia no acabó con Carlota: también porque a falta de una verdadera, imposible, y en última instancia indeseable <<Historia Universal>>, existen muchas historias no sólo particulares sino cambiantes, según las perspectivas de tiempo y espacio desde las que son <<escritas>>. (638)

But the last page on the Empire and the Emperor and Empress of Mexico, the page that would contain that “Judgment of History”—in uppercase letters—of which Benito Juárez spoke, would never be written and not only because the madness of history did not end with Carlota: also because in the absence of a true, impossible, and in the last instance undesirable “Universal History,” there exist many histories that are not only individual but also ever-changing, according to the perspectives of the time and space in which they are “written”.

Essentially, the idea that the authorial voice is conveying is similar to that of Ranajit Guha, who contests the Hegelian tradition of understanding history as a singular, unfolding World-history. Guha states that the “prose of the world,” which expresses the “historicality” of the past, the meaning and effects of past events as perceived by the individual, has been placed in an inferior position to the “prose of history,” the narrative of the nation state (24-25). Recognizing the inadequacies of traditional historiography to capture what he terms as the “historicality” of everyday experience, Ranajit Guha states that it is “[n]o wonder that our critique has to look elsewhere, over the fence so to say, to neighboring fields of knowledge for inspiration, and finds it in literature, which differs significantly from historiography in dealing with historicality” (5). It appears that the authorial voice is making a similar argument, not by claiming that traditional historiography is pure invention—as some extreme postmodernists would argue—but rather that as a means of understanding the past it is always provisional, incomplete, and inescapably personal.

Returning to the theme of the individual’s perception of the past and the ways in which it operates in the present, the authorial voice adds:

En lo que respecta a la actuación individual, a la responsabilidad política y ética de Maximiliano y Carlota, la imposibilidad de una historia universal, que a su vez impide la existencia de un juicio también universal, no ha evitado, desde luego—porque de eso están hechas las historias particulares—, la proliferación de juicios personales. Pero, como también sucede, esos juicios no sólo han sido emitidos por historiadores, sino también por aquellos novelistas y dramaturgos que han cedido a la fascinación de la historia. (641)

With respect to Maximilian and Carlota’s individual action, political responsibility, and ethics, the impossibility of a universal history, which also prevents the existence of a universal judgment, has not avoided the proliferation of personal judgments (of course—because this is what personal histories are made of). It often happens that these judgments are

not just emitted by historians but also by the novelists and playwrights that have ceded to the fascination of history.

The exploration of personal and heteroglossic histories is the expressed primary goal of the authorial voice in narrating the story of the Second Mexican Empire and the years that Carlota spends reflecting upon and interacting with the past. However, it seems that in the process the authorial voice has encountered as many questions as answers regarding the role of the artist in exploring the past. “¿Pero qué sucede cuando un autor no puede escapar a la historia? ¿Cuándo no puede olvidar, a voluntad, lo aprendido? ‘But what happens when an author cannot escape history? When he cannot forget, willfully, what he has learned’ (641)? It is the authorial voice’s answer to this question that offers a means to better understand Noticias del Imperio and its unique presentation of history. Citing past attempts at understanding history and the ways in which the past, present, and future interact, the authorial voice avers that, “[q]uizás la solución sea no plantearse una alternativa, como Borges, y no eludir la historia, como Usigli, sino tratar de conciliar todo lo verdadero que pueda tener la historia con lo exacto que pueda tener la invención” ‘Perhaps the solution lies in not proposing an alternative, like Borges, nor in eluding history, like Usigli, but rather trying to reconcile all that is truthful that history can offer with all that the exactness that invention can offer’ (641).⁴ This hybrid narration would indeed offer the reader a more complete, comprehensive way of understanding the past and present.

⁴ Rodolfo Usigli’s formula in writing Corona de sombra is explained in an “Advertencia,” a forward to his play about Carlota and Maximilian. Explaining that he has given the play the subtitle of a “pieza antihistórica en tres actos,” ‘an antihistoric piece in three acts,’ Usigli states that “se trata de una cuestión mayormente polémica: de una discusión entre la historia y la interpretación de la historia en la perspectiva del tiempo” ‘it deals with a mostly polemical question: of a discussion between history and the interpretation of history in the perspective of time’ (xv).

In a similar way, Carlos Fuentes highlights the author's role in the writing of the present, past, and future and the space of contestation that is created with this hybrid narrative stating:

Imaginar el pasado. Recordar el futuro. Un escritor conjuga los tiempos y las tensiones de la vida humana con medios verbales. Recordarlo y escribirlo todo: desde la época colonial, la América Española ha vivido la doble realidad de leyes humanas, progresistas y democráticas (las Leyes de Indias, las constituciones de las repúblicas independientes) en contradicción con una realidad inhumana, retrógrada y autoritaria. (Valiente 18-19)

Imagining the past. Remembering the future. A writer conjugates the tenses and tensions of human life through verbal modes. Remembering and writing it all down: since the colonial period, Spanish America has lived the double reality of progressive and democratic human laws (the Laws of the Indies, the constitutions of the independent republics) in contradiction with an inhumane, retrograde, and authoritarian reality.

As Fuentes reminds us, literature has traditionally had the freedom to invent and imagine. Nonetheless, in contradicting the truth claims of traditional historiography, works like Noticias del imperio remind us of the exclusionary discourses that have conventionally been accepted as unquestionably comprehensive. Just as the “prose of history” often removes individual humanity from the past, the humanity of the present is expressed in myriad ways. One such way of understanding the present is to understand how it interacts with the past.

This is the process to which the reader bears witness through Carlota's monologue in Noticias del Imperio. The empress's words, the blending of an invented past and a schizophrenic present, are indeed those of a madwoman. Nonetheless, in Carlota's narrative there is an example, albeit in exaggerated form, of a new hybrid approach to understanding how temporality as personally experienced makes subordinate the conventions of pure, astrophysical time. This is not to question what has occurred in the

past; for this is the work of historiography and traditional historical fiction. In its place, Carlota's quest, and that of the authorial voice, is to reconcile and understand the ways in which the perplexing past operates in an equally incomprehensible present.

CHAPTER 3

Signs from the Present: La Malinche in Contemporary Mexico

La fuerza del teatro, pero también su contradicción profunda, es que no puede sobrevivir si no es negando la memoria como memoria cualquiera de sus formas. En él, la memoria ya no es el signo del pasado. Se ha convertido en presente. (Féral 25)

The power of theatre, but also its profound contradiction, is that it cannot survive if it is not negating memory as memory in one of its many forms. In theatre, memory is not the sign of the past. It has been made present.

One can argue that there is not a more polemical figure in Mexican historiography than that of La Malinche. Almost five hundred years after her involvement in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, doña Marina, as she was known to the Spanish, or Malintzín as she was called in Nahuatl, has paradoxically come to represent both the traitor of the indigenous peoples and the mythological mother of Mexico. As Sandra Messinger Cypess notes in her work La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth, the historical woman, whose own voice has never been registered, has been transformed into a sign within her culture's myth system (6). As a constantly evolving sign, she can be found in a wide range of artistic texts throughout Mexican history.

Adding to the many texts about this mythological figure, Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda, in his play La Malinche (premier 1998, published 2000), portrays a multifaceted

La Malinche, bound by neither time nor space, who interacts with Hernán Cortés, Moctezuma, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Cuauhtémoc, among others, who are transported through time to present-day Mexico. Of particular interest are La Malinche's engagements with contemporary Mexicans in which she serves as a representative in congress, an interpreter between the government and the Zapatistas, a news reporter, and as a tormented mother whose troubling relationship with her children forces her to visit a psychoanalyst. Throughout the work, La Malinche's identity is constantly changing. Mexican history and La Malinche's identity are in a state of flux, highlighting the complexity of historiography and its engagement with the present. The intertextual nature of historiography is ever present in the play, as many of the scenes are adapted from original sources that include náhuatl poetry, Díaz del Castillo's chronicles, popular songs, and Paz's El laberinto de la soledad, among other texts.

Artistically, the juxtaposition of disparate times, personages, conflicts, historical documents, and current events in La Malinche seems to indicate a shift in Rascón Banda's style which has been called, among other names, "new realism" (Dauster 88-89) and "hyperrealism" (Gann 78). As Vicente Leñero explains,

"[Rascón Banda] no se propone un realismo verosímil, sino verdadero". Esta afirmación sintetiza cabalmente el espíritu del teatro rasconiano, que se adentra con suficiente profundidad en una situación y la dramatiza sin menoscabo de su esencia, por ello, además de la historia lo importante aquí reside en cómo es contada, en su lenguaje y estructura. (Saravia 118)

"[Rascón] does not propose a verisimilar realism, rather a truthful realism". This affirmation perfectly synthesizes the spirit of Rascón's theatre; it takes in a situation with sufficient profoundness and it dramatizes it without losing its essence. That is why, apart from the storyline, what is important here resides in how it is told, in its language and structure. (Saravia 118)

The “truthful realism,” of which Rascón Banda’s former teacher speaks is very present in La Malinche given that the work forces the spectator to contemplate above all else the sometimes harsh realities of contemporary Mexico. As Daniel Meyran notes, Rascón Banda’s theatre

[e]s un espejo en el que podemos mirarnos y en el cual nos sorprende ver qué cara tenemos [. . .]. He aquí el teatro, en aquella confrontación temporal y espacial en la que el imaginario social en su tentativa de representación de lo real se pone en escena como pensamiento mestizo, afirmando su herencia patrimonial y su interculturalidad. (44)

[i]s a mirror in which we can look at ourselves and in which we are surprised to see the face we have [. . .]. This is the theatre, in that temporal and spatial confrontation in which the social imaginary in its attempt at representing the real is placed on stage as mestizo thought, affirming its patrimonial heritage and its interculturality.

As time and space mingle on the stage, the audience/reader must wonder the reason for the anachronistic and illogical nature of this play. Stuart A. Day notes that “[i]ronically, while Rascón Banda gives La Malinche a voice with which to vindicate herself, malinchismo is the defining concept of the play” (123). Furthermore, Day underscores how the play critiques the practice of malinchismo within the sociopolitical context of contemporary Mexican politics: “La Malinche stages an important part of relations between Mexico and the United States. Many Mexicans feel as though their country is continually being invaded (culturally and economically) and that treaties like NAFTA will always favor their neighbor to the North” (123). George Woodyard’s analysis of La Malinche offers a similar conclusion, stating that

[a]l traer a la Malinche al tiempo actual como figura política, Rascón Banda eleva la conciencia de su público/lector sobre las vicisitudes de los sistemas político-económicos de México. Al mismo tiempo, entretiene a su público con una visión irónica de una realidad abrumadora para el pueblo actual. (73)

[b]y bringing la Malinche to the present time as a political figure, Rascón Banda elevates the consciousness of his public/reader about the vicissitudes of the politico-economic systems of Mexico. At the same time, he entertains his public with an ironic vision of an overwhelming reality for the contemporary Mexican people.

In a similar way, Laurietz Seda sees Rascón Banda's *La Malinche* as an ambiguous character "que sirve para representar y a la misma vez problematizar las nociones de la etnia y clase social en el contexto de los procesos de la globalización y de las políticas neoliberales que ha asumido el país desde los años 80" 'that serves to represent and at the same time problematize the notions of ethnicity and social class in the context of the processes of globalization and neoliberal politics that the country has taken on since the 80s' (Seda 91). While Day, Seda, and Woodyard find the anachronistic placement of *La Malinche* in the present as a useful tool in combating malignant political, economic, and cultural invasions in contemporary Mexico, Maarten van Delden criticizes Rascón Banda's *La Malinche* as offering "an extremely rigid reading of Mexican history" (15). Furthermore, van Delden posits that "Rascón Banda uses his freedom as a playwright to rewrite the past, but the effect is paradoxically to make the historical *La Malinche* less free. All her actions are inserted into a larger narrative—the narrative of the Mexican nation—which was completely invisible to her at the time she lived" (16).

Given the openly historical contents and characters of *La Malinche*, it would be understandable for the spectator/reader to see the work simply as a questioning of how past events and personages have been written and established in Mexican historiography.⁵

⁵ The reexamination and reuse of historical events has been quite common in Mexican theatre. As Meyran points out, much of contemporary Mexican theatre utilizes the past in innovative ways "[p]orque nos encontramos, con la escritura de la memoria y la memoria de la escritura, en la dimensión temporal, por lo que semejanza y diferencia se identifican respectivamente a la repetición continua y al contraste discontinuo. Contrariamente a la imagen que se suele dar oficialmente de la cultura, ella se define como un espacio/tiempo que sufre modelización y rectificaciones periódicas, igual que la historia que la orienta, y se fundamenta sobre una herencia menos auténtica de lo que se pretende. Un ejemplo es la representación

Without a doubt, this is an important aspect of any interpretation of this work.

Nonetheless, the physical, temporal, and scenic space of the action of the play, and the placement of the audience in the seats of the present-day legislature, highlights the fact that this work is primarily concerned with contemporary Mexico. Furthermore, I believe that the presence of historical personages and events on the contemporary stage is more than an allegory for present problems. In my analysis of La Malinche, I will illustrate how the mythological personages of the past operate in the present collective memory in a very real way. Of particular interest is the way in which this process is brought to the foreground by the anachronistic placement of La Malinche, Cortés, and others in contemporary situations. I intend to show that in La Malinche the spectator/reader is forced to engage and combat the manner in which these historical figures and scenarios operate within the new realities of present-day Mexico.

Before continuing, it is necessary to point out that this study is primarily based on the dramatic text written by Rascón Banda. The play seen by the public in Mexico City and Guanajuato was directed by the Austrian Johann Kresnik, who used Rascón Banda's text as a starting point for a much different production. Many criticized Rascón Banda of, in an ironic twist, writing a play about malinchismo to be staged by a foreign director. However, in the bitácora, Rascón Banda points out more than once that his limited role in

contemporánea del mundo prehispánico y de la colonia en el teatro mexicano y del desencadenamiento de pasiones que provoca todavía hoy (pienso en la puesta de La Malinche de Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda, por el director austriaco Johann Kresnik [. . .])” ‘It is because we find ourselves, with the writing of memory and the memory of writing, in a temporal dimension, through which similarity and difference are respectively identified with continuous repetition and discontinuous contrast. Contrary to the traditionally image given of culture, it is defined as a space/time that suffers periodical modelization and rectification, in the same way that history orients it and is founded on a less authentic heritage than is intended. An example is the contemporary representation of the pre-Hispanic and colonial worlds in Mexican theatre and the unleashing of passions that these provoke still today (I am thinking of the staging of Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda's La Malinche by the Austrian director Johann Kresnik [. . .])’ (44).

the production was that of “dramaturgista, o sea consejero y primer espectador” ‘dramaturge, or adviser and first spectator’ (283). Although Rascón Banda is perhaps understating his role in the production, it is easy to understand the basis of much of the criticism of a Mexican male writing a script about La Malinche and malinchismo to be staged by a foreign director. Regardless of the controversy surrounding the theatrical production, the dramatic text is itself an engaging and profound work on history and contemporary politics and culture in Mexico.

The thirty-seven scenes that make up the play present the public with La Malinche in the historical settings of the Massacre of Acteal, the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán, the Noche Triste, the torture and death of Cuauhtémoc, as well as in modern day Mexico City as a television news reporter, an interpreter between the government and the Zapatistas, and in congress as a perredista representative⁶. Utilizing La Malinche to speak to contemporary issues is nothing new. As Day states, “[t]he mythical, historical La Malinche has often been revitalized by Mexican authors, who see in her the possibility to confront the complexity of present-day politics” (200). However, La Malinche, as portrayed in Rascón Banda’s play, challenges the very identities to which she has been assigned throughout Mexican history.

The action of La Malinche takes place in the Palacio de San Lázaro, the seat of the Mexican legislature. Spatially, forming part of the performance, “[l]os espectadores ocupan las curules de los diputados” ‘the spectators occupy the legislators’ seats’ (11).

⁶ It is worth noting the selection of the PRD (Partido Revolucionario Democrática) as La Malinche’s political affiliation. The three main political parties of Mexico are the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional), the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional), and the PRD. While the PAN, considered right of center, has controlled the Executive Branch since the elections of 2000, the PRI has been known for its grip on power since the Revolution as well as, for some, its corruption. The PRD, founded in 1988, is viewed as the most left of the main political parties and is often seen as a counter-balance to prevailing neoliberal policies espoused by the PAN and, to a lesser extent, the PRI.

By placing the interactions of historical and contemporary personages in the site of the present-day Mexican legislature, Rascón Banda creates a space in which the scenarios of conquest, hybridization, translation, and mythification are transposed from a distant past to the present. Meyran, in his study on the relationship between theatre and history, observes how the physical space of the stage intrinsically carries with it historical meaning while, conversely, also serving as the locus of creation and contestation:

El escenario es un sitio físico y concreto, un espacio en que la historia aparece y se construye, en que la teatralidad se hace historicidad. Creo poder afirmar que el espacio escénico nace de la invención de la historia como problemática. La historia viene con el espacio escénico [. . .]. Lo que surge es la posibilidad de dominar el acontecimiento. (18)

The stage is a physical and concrete site, a space in which history appears and is constructed, in which theatricality becomes historicity. I think I can affirm that the scenic space is born of the idea of history as problematic. History comes with the scenic space [. . .]. What arises is the possibility of dominating the historical event.

In order to dominate and contest the events of the past as they operate in the present, Rascón Banda brings the distant past in contact with the contemporary realities of Mexico. In La Malinche the spatiotemporal blending of distinct times and situations is created through overt anachronisms that make clear that this play is more than just a reanalysis of the Spanish Conquest of Mesoamerica. While the main characters and many of the events brought to life on the stage are indeed from a distant past, the action of the play occurs or is seen through the perspective of the present. The chronotope, “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bahktin 84), is unique in *La Malinche* in that it allows for the fusion of the past to the present. According to Mikhail Bahktin, in order to understand a work of literature, one must always have in mind the chronotope given that “in literature and art

itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values” (243).

The spatial aspect of the chronotope of La Malinche is that of a past superimposed upon present-day Mexico. Cortés and Bernal Díaz del Castillo flop around in snorkel gear as gringo tourists in Cancún, La Malinche reports in front of a television camera mere feet away from where grand temple of Tenochtitlán once stood, and Cuauhtémoc is tortured using contemporary police techniques like waterboarding and cigarette burns. One must question the overarching reasons for which Rascón Banda brings to the stage the already worked and reworked characters of La Malinche, Hernán Cortés, Cuauhtémoc, and the like. The focus of La Malinche is not only on how the history of Mexico has been written, but also on the scenario of the Spanish Conquest and how this scenario repeats itself continually into the present. Regarding the power of scenarios as a source of meaning, Diana Taylor challenges traditional logocentric epistemologies by noting that

Instead of privileging texts and narratives, we could also look to scenarios as meaning-making paradigms that structure social environments, behaviors, and potential outcomes. [. . .] Scenario, “a sketch or outline of the plot of a play, giving particulars of the scenes, situations, etc.,” like performance, means never for the first time. Like Barthes’s mythical speech, it consists of “material which has already been worked on” (Mythologies, 110). Its portable framework bears the weight of accumulative repeats. The scenario makes visible, yet again, what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes. (Archive 28; emphasis in original)

In La Malinche, the use of the Conquest scenarios so well known to contemporary Mexicans, by “making visible” what is already present, forces the spectator/reader to confront the specters of a distant and mystified past that continue to operate in the present. By displaying how the scenarios of the Conquest are actively engaged with the

present, the reader/spectator becomes empowered to question, contemplate, and challenge the malleable meanings that have been assigned to these historical events and characters. As Meyran points out, much of contemporary Mexican theatre utilizes the past in innovative ways “[p]orque nos encontramos, con la escritura de la memoria y la memoria de la escritura, en la dimensión temporal, por lo que semejanza y diferencia se identifican respectivamente a la repetición continua y al contraste discontinuo” ‘It is because we find ourselves, with the writing of memory and the memory of writing, in a temporal dimension, through which similarity and difference are respectively identified with continuous repetition and discontinuous contrast’ (44).

The play opens with La Malinche, a perredista representative, throwing down the gauntlet by challenging the legislature to recognize the proper place that La Malinche, the historical and mythological figure, has played in Mexican history:

MALINCHE. Ha llegado el momento de reconocer sus méritos y valioso papel en la fundación de este país. Ha llegado el momento de rendirle tributo a la mujer que nació en Apíñala y de honrar su memoria escribiendo su nombre con letras de oro, allí junto a los otros próceres. [. . .] ¡Me refiero a Malintzin Tepenal!

HAY UN SILENCIO DE DESCONCIERTO, LUEGO GRITOS,
SILBIDOS Y PROTESTAS. (16-17)

MALINCHE. The moment for recognizing her merits and valuable role in the foundation of this country has arrived. It’s time to offer tribute to the woman born in Apíñala and honor her memory by writing her name in golden letters, there next to the other eminent people. [. . .] I’m referring to Malintzin Tepenal!

THERE IS A SILENCE OF CONFUSION, THEN SHOUTS,
WHISTLING, AND PROTESTS.

The scandalous reaction of the legislators to the idea of honoring La Malinche alongside the most revered national heroes reaffirms the observation of Cypess that “during most

periods of history she has been maligned and mistreated, an exile in her own land” (ix).

As the scene ends in chaotic screams of indignation, Malinche Joven, the youngest of the three Malinches the public sees on the stage throughout the play, enters singing “La maldición de Malinche,” a song by Gabino Palomares in which the Spanish Conquest and La Malinche’s role in it, is juxtaposed with the new “invasions” of foreigners in the twentieth century:

Hoy, en pleno siglo veinte
nos siguen llegando rubios
y les abrimos la casa
y los llamamos amigos.
[. . .]
Oh, maldición de Malinche
enfermedad del presente,
cuando dejarás mi tierra
cuando harás libre a mi gente. (20-21)

Today, in the twentieth century
The blonds keep on coming
and we open our homes to them
and we call them friends.
[. . .]
Oh, curse of Malinche
sickness of the present,
when will you leave my land
when will you make my people free.

The words of the song mirror the main theme of the concept of malinchismo during the present-day political, cultural, and economic realities of Mexico. As in “La maldición de Malinche,” the connection between the past and present in La Malinche can be seen as an allegorical eternal return. The rubios, the blond foreigners, continue to culturally and economically invade the lands of Mexico as malinchistas continue to betray the interests of their own people. The scenario of conquest is repeated, given that “the form and

content of the play present history as circular, the past as always present” (Day 125). As Carlos Fuentes observes,

[w]e turn on the television sets of the Mexican mind, and every night we hear the same evening news. Top of the news: THE SPANISH HAVE CONQUERED MEXICO. Second item: THE GRINGOS STOLE HALF OUR TERRITORY. After that, murders, arson, kidnappings, and five-legged calves. We try to understand the fabulous totality and instantaneity of true Mexican time. We cannot disguise ourselves as what we are not, so as to live that total, instantaneous time which we can perhaps understand but not fully experience. For ours is a demanding time; it wants us to live it completely, with hands and dreams, with desire and dust” (Fuentes, New Time 22).

The presence of a repetitious, circular history would seem to signal that most likely in the future this cycle will be continued, offering no space for agency and contestation. However, this fatalistic interpretation is not the message of La Malinche. By juxtaposing the past with the present on the stage, a space is created where not only the meaning of past and present events can be problematized and contested, but also where the public can become engaged with personages like La Malinche and Cortés, specters of the past whose presence contributes to the “sickness of the present.”

The placement of La Malinche, Cortés, Cuauhtémoc, and others in the present permits a dialectic process in which the spectator/reader not only is engaged with the events of the past, but also with how these historical characters continue to operate in present-day Mexican culture. If the circular, repetitive history of cultural and economic invasion is to be broken, the complex processes and agents that permit these cycles must be revealed, examined, and understood. The complex, multifaceted description of events and characters, past and present, in La Malinche suggests that the conventional understanding of these paradigms and scenarios is not sufficient to combat the ways in which they function in contemporary Mexico. As Cypess observes in the case of La

Malinche, “the sign ‘La Malinche’ functions as a continually enlarging palimpsest of Mexican cultural identity whose layers of meaning have accrued through the years” (5). Traditionally, La Malinche, as a sign, has been seen as one pole of binary opposites. However, through the use of canonical and non-canonical intertextual references, Rascón Banda shows that the simplistic characterizations of La Malinche as either virgin/whore, aggressor/victim and patriot/traitor do not capture the much more complex nature of La Malinche and the politics she has come to represent. Furthermore, through the multifaceted portrayal of La Malinche, the play highlights the danger of totalizing discourse and calls for a much more profound reflection into the themes of complicity and patriotism as a tool for change against contemporary Mexico’s political system so dominated by neoliberal policies.

Unlike the passive indigenous Mother of Octavio Paz’s “Los hijos de la Malinche” or the astute, manipulating La Malinche of Rosario Castellano’s El eterno femenino, Rascón Banda’s La Malinche cannot be understood through any one interpretation. Her characterization in the play is created through the multiple texts that have and continue to contribute to the evolution of the mythological La Malinche. She lives on in the collective memory of Mexicans in the form of a sign given that “la memoria no es un nuevo dato sino uno que se vuelve a construir gracias a un sistema semiótico [. . .]” ‘memory is not a new piece of information rather one that is again constructed thanks to a semiotic system [. . .]’ (44). As a result she goes beyond simple classifications that customarily have defined her. Traditionally, La Malinche has been understood as the pejorative pole within a binary opposition of signs such as virgin/whore, aggressive/passive, macho/hembra, legitimate/bastard, and patriot/traitor.

Given that “[s]tructuralists have generally followed Jakobson and taken the binary opposition as a fundamental operation of the human mind basic to production of meaning,” Jonathan Culler, applying the ideas of Levi-Strauss, notes the usefulness of identifying binary opposites in order to understand complex systems of signification found in cultures:

Binary oppositions can be used to order the most heterogeneous elements, and this is precisely why binarism is so pervasive in literature: when two things are set in opposition to one another the reader is forced to explore qualitative similarities and differences, to make a connection so as to derive meaning from the disjunction. (Structuralist Poetics 15)

It is precisely these binary opposites that have been used to paradoxically build and attack the mythological La Malinche. Examples of this dialogic process can be found in the works of Octavio Paz and Rosario Castellanos. In his essay “Los hijos de la Malinche,” Paz defines La Malinche as the Chingada, “the Mother forcibly violated, opened or deceived” (Labyrinth 79), whose passivity before the rape of Cortés draws parallels with the violation of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico (Laberinto 98-101). Paz’s analysis depends on the binary relationship between the active rape and conquest of the Spanish with the passive violation of the indigenous women.

Contesting the patriarchal characterization of La Malinche and other archetypal women in Mexican history, Castellanos, in El eterno femenino, portrays La Malinche as a woman who is much more aggressive and dominant than the passive, bumbling conquistador Hernán Cortés. Offering Cortés strategic advice on how to make the most of the destruction of his ships by a careless sailor who fell asleep while smoking, La Malinche asks Cortés, “¿Por qué no aprovechas esta circunstancia para hacer que tú, tú, quemaste las naves? [. . .] Hay en tu ejército muchos cobardes y uno que otro traidor que

querían volver. Ahora no pueden hacerlo y no les queda más remedio que enfrentarse a los hechos” (“Why don’t you take advantage of the circumstance to make it that you, you burned down the ships? [. . .] In your army there are many cowards and a few traitors that wanted to go back. Now they can do it and they’ve got no other choice than to face the facts”; 88-9). With regard to this sudden reversal of archetypes, Cypess states that “Castellanos has kept the signifieds, or meanings, but attributes them to the female signifier, or visual image on stage” (127). Castellanos’s use of an inversion of the aggressive/passive binary opposition is a useful tool for attacking the patriarchal discourse that has defined La Malinche. However, it can also be argued that by her very characterization of La Malinche as the aggressor, Castellanos has repeated the traditional patriarchal valorization of aggressive dominance as a desirable trait.

As Culler warns, “[t]he advantage of binarism, but also its principal danger, lies in the fact that it permits one to classify anything” (Structuralist Poetics 15). That is to say, this classification is useful in that it helps to comprehend complex systems of meaning. However, the danger inherent in binaries is that they do not truly describe meaning outside of their self-contained system. Furthermore, the work of semiologists and philosophers such as Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, C. S. Peirce, and Jacques Derrida illustrates that a signified should not be understood as a singular, transcendental concept that defines the arbitrarily assigned signifier. As a result, a singular meaning, or signified, becomes impossible given that meaning is always deferred through an endless chain of signs.

Combating the customary simplistic characterization of La Malinche becomes much more than an exercise in semiotic theory, when one remembers that “La Malinche

and the Virgin of Guadalupe signal mestizaje as a biological issue (the mother of the mestizo race), as embodying a living culture, and perhaps most important, as a vital presence that links the past to the present in an embodied way” (Taylor, Archive 99).

Examining this continual codification of La Malinche as symbol, palimpsest, or paradigm is an essential element in contesting the phenomenon of malinchismo in the present.

In the play, the exploration of the identity of La Malinche is most apparent in the scene appropriately titled “Los adjetivos” ‘The Adjectives,’ where the public sees three Malinches (old, young, and adult) that reflect on their many identities throughout Mexican history.

LAS TRES MALINCHES ENTRAN EN CRISIS Y SE HABLAN COMO
SI HABLARAN A SUS IMÁGENES EN UN ESPEJO.

¿Qué soy? / Malinche. / La rajada. / Malintzin. / ¿Qué soy? / Una calle en Coyoacán. / Marina. / La Llorona. / ¿Qué soy? / Un volcán en Tlaxcala. / La lengua. / Una intermediaria. / ¿Qué soy? / La violada. / Un puente. / Barragana. / ¿Qué soy? / Traidora. / Espía. / Embajadora. / ¿Qué soy? / Consejera. / Amante. / Mito. / ¿Qué soy? / India de buen parecer, entrometida y desenvuelta. (89-90)

THE THREE MALINCHES ENTER INTO A CRISIS AND TALK TO
THEMSELVES AS IF THEY WERE TALKING TO THEIR
IMAGES IN A MIRROR.

What am I? / Malinche. / The treacherous one. / Malintzin. / What am I? / A street in Coyoacán. / Marina. / The Llorona. / What am I? / A volcano in Tlaxcala. / The interpreter. / An intermediary. / What am I? / The violated one. / A bridge. / Mistress / What am I? / Traitor. / Spy. / Ambassador. / What am I? / Adviser. / Lover. / Myth. / What am I? / A meddling, self-assured, attractive Indian.

This seemingly endless chain of signs points to the way in which La Malinche, as a myth, has been transformed into various incongruous signs that offer a multiplicity of meanings. Furthermore, as to underscore the textual foundation of the signs in question, the last words of the scene, “India de buen parecer, entrometida y

desenvuelta,” are taken directly from Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s description of Doña Marina in Historia verdadera de la cosas de Nueva España.

The words used by the three Malinches to describe their identity all exist within the historical discourse about La Malinche. However, it must be noted that after each question of “¿Qué soy?,” the corresponding signs are organized in groups of three. By the usage of three identities as the answer to the existential question “¿Qué soy?,” the public is presented with signs that do not align neatly in binary opposition.

Further in the play, La Malinche once again battles any definition of her as simply one pole of a binary pair as she defends herself before the psychoanalyst who reads certain fragments from Paz’s “Los hijos de la Malinche”:

ANALISTA. (LEE) Su mancha, la de usted, es constitucional y reside según se dice en este texto, reside en su sexo. “[. . .] Si la Chingada es una representación de la madre violada, no me parece forzado asociarla a la Conquista, que fue también una violación...”

MALINCHE. Sí y no. (112)

ANALYST. (READS) Her stain, your stain, is constitutional and it resides, according to what this text says, it resides in your sex. “[. . .] If the Chingada is a representation of the violated mother, it does not seem to be a stretch to associate her with the Conquest which was also a violation...”

MALINCHE. Yes and no.

As the psychoanalyst continues reading from Paz’s text, La Malinche finds herself agreeing and disagreeing with Paz’s portrayal of her as the passive Chingada.

ANALISTA. (LEE) “El símbolo de la entrega es doña Malinche...”

MALINCHE. (INTERRUMPE) ¡Yo no me entregué!

ANALISTA. (LEE) “Es verdad que ella se da voluntariamente al conquistador pero éste, apenas deja de serle útil y la olvida...”

MALINCHE. Sí. En eso tiene razón. Después de serle útil me olvidó
[. . .]

ANALISTA. [. . .] (LEE) “Doña Marina se ha convertido en una figura
que representa a las indias fascinadas por los españoles...”

MALINCHE. ¡Fascinadas! ¿Fascinadas dice? (113)

ANALYST. (READS) “The symbol of the surrender is doña Malinche...”

MALINCHE. (INTERRUPTS) I didn’t surrender myself!

ANALYST. (READS) “It’s true that she voluntarily gave herself to the
conquistador but he, as soon as she was not useful to him forgets
her...”

MALINCHE. Yes. He’s right about that. After I was of use to him he
forgot me [. . .]

ANALYST. (READS) Doña Marina has been converted into a figure that
represents the Indian women fascinated by the Spanish men...”

MALINCHE. Fascinated! He says fascinated?

The inability of Paz to understand the events surrounding her life and its subsequent meaning as anything more than pure passivity causes La Malinche to become frustrated and declare angrily, “O sea que soy traidora. O sea que no me perdonan. ¡Chinguen a su madre todos!” ‘So I’m a traitor. So they don’t forgive me. They can all go fuck their mother!’ (113).

La Malinche’s argument highlights the danger in the simplicity of Paz’s characterization made by filtering meaning through only one sign in a binary opposition. Earlier in the session with the psychoanalyst, La Malinche questions Paz’s use of binary opposites.

MALINCHE. (INTERRUMPE) Ora sí. Ora sí estamos fregados. ¿Por
qué me contraponen con la Virgen de Guadalupe, con mi Madre
Tonanzin? Ora sí...Ella es la Madre Virgen y yo la Madre Violada.
Ella la Madre Pura y yo, la Chingada Madre.

ANALISTA. No lo dije yo. Éste es El laberinto de la soledad.

MALINCHE. Estará en la soledad de los laberintos o en las Sagradas Escrituras, pero no estoy de acuerdo.

ANALISTA. Lo dijo el Poeta.

MALINCHE. No siempre los poetas dicen la verdad. A veces mienten.
[. . .]

ANALISTA. Pero éste es el gran poeta. Nuestro premio Nobel [sic].

MALINCHE. ¿Nobel [sic]? ¿Eso viene de “noble” acaso? Con el debido respeto, pero no estoy de acuerdo. (111-12)

MALINCHE. (INTERRUPTS) Now yes. Now we're screwed. Why do they contrast me with the Virgin of Guadalupe, with my Mother Tonanzin. Now yes...She is the Virgin Mother and I'm the Violated Mother. She the Pure Mother and I, The Chingada Mother.

ANALYST. I didn't say it. This is The Labyrinth of Solitude.

MALINCHE. It might be in the solitude of the labyrinths or in the Holy Scriptures, but I don't agree.

ANALYST. The Poet said it.

MALINCHE. Poets don't always tell the truth. Sometimes they lie [. . .]

ANALYST. But this is our great poet. Our Nobel Prize.

MALINCHE. Nobel? Does that come from noble by any chance? With all due respect, but I disagree.

By pointing out the error in relying on one essential sign to frame meaning, La Malinche weakens the foundation of Paz's thesis. As a result, any attempt to categorize La Malinche (and all she has come to represent) as one sign defined only by its relation to its diametrical opposite, highlights the artificiality of knowledge within a discursive system.

However, given that no singular meaning can be fixed through language, one must look for meaning within the links of the chain of signs. In La Malinche, the use of

intertextual references serves as a basis for multiple interpretations of La Malinche and malinchismo. In the space left by destabilizing the use of binary opposites as an absolute system of meaning, La Malinche can be understood as a text comprised of a multiplicity of signs that offers glimpses into a constantly evolving object of impermanent knowledge. Given this break with the idea of knowledge as an absolute, one must consider that identity can only be understood as a never-ending chain of differences. It is important to note Linda Hutcheon's statement that "[p]ostmodern difference is always plural and provisional" (Poetics 65). Given the plural and provisional nature of the signs that lead to an ever-changing identity of the mythological figure, it is not surprising that La Malinche's complicity in the conquests of Mexico continues in a state of flux with each scene.

Considering La Malinche as an ever-present intertextual discourse proves to be a useful tool in approaching this organic identity. By recognizing the intertextual nature of all texts, Hutcheon states that "[t]he reader is forced to acknowledge not only the inevitable textuality of our knowledge of the past, but also both the value and the limitation of the inescapably discursive form of that knowledge" (Poetics 127). It is important to remember that Rascón Banda's dramatic text is based upon and engages a multiplicity of intertextual references. By using canonical works by Octavio Paz, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, and Bernardino de Sahagún, among others, Rascón Banda openly confronts the established discourse about La Malinche. When Cortés, Bartolomé de las Casas, La Malinche and a group of Spaniards contemplate an idol of Coatlicue, the Mexica goddess of destruction, the public observes the inadequacies of this established discourse to explain the reality of the New World:

CORTÉS. Horrorosa.

FRAILE 1. Es un demonio.

MALINCHE. Una diosa.

BARTOLOMÉ. Un misterio tremendo.

CORTÉS. Es sólo una masa de piedra.

BARTOLOMÉ. Es un texto labrado. (85)

CORTÉS. Horrifying.

FRAILE 1. It's a demon.

MALINCHE. A goddess.

BARTOLOMÉ. A tremendous mystery.

CORTÉS. It's only a stone mass.

BARTOLOMÉ. It's a worked text.

Cortés himself seems to recognize that, from his perspective, formerly accepted textual truths no longer hold water in this new reality. Cortés must confront the fact that from his worldview, “[n]uestro mundo tiene tres tiempos, tres edades, tres humores, tres personas, tres continentes. ¿Qué es este continente? ¿En dónde estamos?” “[o]ur world has three times, three ages, three humours, three persons, three continents. What is this continent? Where are we?” (85). Recognizing this textual and ontological crisis, las Casas offers Cortés hope by providing a glimpse into how future discourse will attempt to neatly accommodate this new reality:

BARTOLOMÉ. Es un problema histórico nada más. Las civilizaciones de estas tierras sólo son diferentes, son la otredad.

CORTÉS. ¿La qué?

BARTOLOMÉ. La otredad. Así la llamará Octavio Paz. (86)

BARTOLOMÉ. It's a historical problem, that's all. The civilizations in these lands are just different, it's "otherness".

CORTÉS. What?

BARTOLOMÉ. Otherness. That's what Octavio Paz will call it.

Nonetheless, the concept of otredad, Paz's neologism similar to the English word "otherness," cannot truly capture the complexities and nuances of meaning that the goddess Coatlicue represents. As Carlos Fuentes observes, "Cuando el tiempo y el espacio se reúnen en la Coatlicue, dejan de ser objeto de identificación human y se imponen como algo más, un poder aparte que no se funde con lo real y que, sin embargo, es parte de lo real porque, quizás a pesar suyo, multiplica la realidad" 'When time and space meet in Coatlicue, they cease to be an object of human identification and something else is imposed, a power apart that does not mesh with reality and that, nonetheless, is part of reality because, perhaps in spite of itself, it multiplies reality' (Tiempo 19). This reality and worldview, based upon ontological and epistemological categories unknown to the Spanish conquistadors, can never be truly comprehended by the European others. Much like the Spanish before the unknown, an act of translation is in order to begin to understand another world view with its own vision of reality.

Historically, it is well known that La Malinche served as translator to Cortés during the toppling of the Aztec Empire. Interestingly, in Rascón Banda's text La Malinche comprehends that translation is not a viable means to obtain untainted knowledge, stating that "[s]er traductora era mi oficio. [. . .] Y me di valor. Me atreví. Mentí a unos y a otros. Cambié las palabras. Me propuse convertir en verdad la gran mentira del entendimiento" 'Being a translator was my job. [. . .] And I got up the

courage. I took a chance. I lied to people here and there. I changed the words. I tried to convert the great lie of understanding into the truth' (95). Nonetheless, *La Malinche* comes to recognize the inevitable failure of her quest to exchange singular meaning from one language and culture to another:

Yo inventaba una verdad hecha de mentiras cada vez que traducía de ida y vuelta entre los dos mundos. Una verdad que sólo podía ser verdad para otro mundo, para otro ser que estaba todavía por llegar. Lo intenté. No me arrepiento. (95)

I invented a truth made of lies every time I translated back and forth between the two worlds. A truth that could only be a truth for the other world, for the other being that had not arrived yet. I tried. I don't regret it.

Understanding the impossibility to capture essential meaning leads *La Malinche* to ask the questions, "¿Qué es verdad? ¿Qué es mentira?" (What is true? What is a lie?; 96).

As Day points out,

[i]n *La Malinche*, Rascón Banda, a writer who always presents the 'truth' as elusive, underscores the sixteenth-century culture clash between the indigenous people and the Spanish by staging the only 'truth' about interpretations: no two suns are the same, even if they refer to the same star. That is, translation is subjective. Words take on different connotations in new cultural contexts; words can be manipulated for political gain. Rascón Banda infuses historical interpretation with individual will and with the desire to deceive. (130)

These questions, and indeed much of *La Malinche*, challenge the concept of truth as a singular, essential referent. Contrary to much criticism of postmodern literature as a destroyer of meaning within discourse, *La Malinche* and other works simply show how discourse as an artifact that can only be understood within the contexts in which it is employed. In her study on historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon states that

[t]he postmodern discourses I have been studying here do not "liquidate referentials" so much as force a rethinking of the entire notion of reference that makes problematic both the traditional realist transparency and this

new reduction of reference to simulacrum. It suggests that all we have ever had to work with is a system of signs, and that to call attention to this is not to deny the real, but to remember that we only give meaning to the real within those signifying systems. (Poetics 229-30; emphasis in original)

The danger, therefore, is not in destroying the agency of language, but rather in the lack of transparency that permits discourse to be used as grounds to manipulate and maintain hegemonic power.

Nowhere in the text is this struggle for discursive transparency more evident than in the exchange between El Licenciado—presumably ex-president Salinas—and the Indians who demand that their rights be respected. The Indians, described as “unos aguafiestas,” ‘partypoopers,’ ruin the party given to celebrate, in El Licenciado’s words, “un día histórico [en el cual] estamos ingresando en el Primer Mundo. Estamos empezando a hablarles de tú a los gringos y a los canadienses y se les ocurre aparecerse aquí” ‘a historical day [in which] we’re entering the First World. We’re beginning to talk to the gringos and Canadians using the informal ‘you’ and it occurs to you to show up here’ (118-19). To rid himself of this unexpected nuisance and the bad image it portrays, El Licenciado asks La Malinche to intervene as his interpreter between Spanish and Tzotzil in a dialogue reminiscent of a similar conversation between Cortés and Moctezuma some four hundred years earlier.

When La Malinche begins to interpret the reason for the Indians’ abruptly perceived presence, El Licenciado cuts her off, declaring, “Ya, ya, ni me lo traduzcas. Basta verlos para saber lo que quieren” ‘Yeah, yeah, don’t even translate it. Just seeing them is enough to know what they want’ (119). To pacify the intruders, he offers to

name two commissions whose titles are comprised of signs loaded with ambiguous meanings.

LICENCIADO. Se nombrará una Comisión de Concordancia y
Pacificación.

MALINCHE. ¿Y le hará caso?

LICENCIADO. Por supuesto. Y una Comisión Nacional de
Intermediación. (120)

LICENCIADO. A Commission on Concordance and Pacification will be
named.

MALINCHE. And will you listen to it?

LICENCIADO. Of course. And a National Intermediation Commission.

El Licenciado names the commissions using signs—Concordancia, Pacificación, and Intermediación—whose signifieds immediately slip into what Jacques Derrida would name a process of différance. Regardless of the linguistic ambiguity, there can be no mistaking El Licenciado's intentions. La Malinche asks him once more, “Y le hará caso?” ‘Will you listen to it?’, to which El Licenciado replies, “Por supuesto. Siempre y cuando no se ponga de parte de ellos” ‘Of course. Always when it doesn't get on their side’ (120). By creating signs that obscure meaning, El Licenciado manipulates the différences in signs in order to pacify the Indians and continue with his party celebrating what the reader/public can only assume is the passing of NAFTA.

Similarly, in the scene titled “Los desacuerdos de San Andrés” ‘The San Andrés disaccords,’ a play on the San Andrés Accords where the Mexican government attempted to negotiate with the leaders of the Zapatista movement, it is El Licenciado who tutors La Malinche on how to manipulate discursive meaning to consolidate and maintain power.

LICENCIADO. Fíjese muy bien, Licenciada. No es lo mismo decir “el Estado les garantizará su acceso a la distribución de la riqueza,” que es lo que ellos piden, que decir “el Estado promoverá su acceso a la distribución,” que es lo que yo propongo. ¿Me entiende? Garantizar, nos ata; promover, sólo nos compromete. ¿Ve usted la diferencia?

MALINCHE. La veo, Licenciado. Están pidiendo “acceder de manera colectiva al uso y disfrute de los recursos naturales de sus territorios”.

LICENCIADO. Está bien, pero quitaría lo de manera colectiva y agregaría “respetando las limitaciones establecidas por la Constitución”. ¿Es mucho pedir?

MALINCHE. Es que cambia el sentido. (127; emphasis in original).

LICENCIADO. Now look here, Licenciada. It’s not the same saying “the State will guarantee them access to the distribution of wealth,” which is what they want, as saying “the State will promote their access to the distribution,” which is what I propose. Do you understand me? To guarantee ties us down; to promote, just compromises us. Do you see the difference?

MALINCHE. I see, Licenciado. They’re asking to “access in a collective way the use and benefits of the natural resources in their territories”.

LICENCIADO. It’s fine. But I would take out the collective way part and add, “respecting the limitations established by the Constitution. Is that too much to ask?”

MALINCHE. It’s just that it changes the meaning.

With this linguistic slight of hand, El Licenciado uses signs to once again betray the vast majority of the Mexican people. This passage clearly implies that El Licenciado is guilty of being a malinchista. However, just as the sign “La Malinche” has been shown to have an unstable meaning, the sign malinchista must also be considered unstable.

Apart from the powerful Gatorade-drinking Licenciado of La Malinche, many others are guilty of helping to contribute to the climate of malinchismo that is allowing an economic and cultural invasion of Mexico. In the scene “Las siete plagas,” ‘The Seven

Plagues,’ the apocalyptic plagues that ravaged Mexico during the Spanish Conquest are juxtaposed with contemporary maladies:

MALINCHE ADULTA. Halloween mata Día de Muertos.

MALINCHE VIEJA. Mall mata tianguis.

MALINCHE ADULTA. Harvard mata UNAM.

MALINCHE VIEJA. TLC mata comercio.

MALINCHE ADULTA. Taladores matan bosques.

MALINCHE VIEJA. Ozono mata chilango. (98)

ADULT MALINCHE. Halloween kills Day of the Dead.

OLD MALINCHE. Mall kills tianguis [traditional markets]

ADULT MALINCHE. Harvard kills UNAM [Autonomous University of Mexico]

OLD MALINCHE. NAFTA kills commerce.

ADULT MALINCHE. Lumberjacks kill forests.

OLD MALINCHE. Ozone kills chilango [nickname for someone from Mexico City].

Seemingly, autochthonous institutions and cultural practices are no match for the new invasions from the North, facilitated by neoliberal economic policies, easily attributed to the actions of malinchista politicians. However, the penultimate scene of La Malinche, “Las nuevas plagas,” ‘The New Plagues,’ shifts the focus away from the sphere of governance to that of quotidian life, in which English and North American culture blend with Spanish and Mexican practices:

--Jo, jo, jo, jo

--¿Me da mi calaverita?
--Una Mac Nuggets, please.
--OK, maguey.
--Happy birthday, to you.
--One Diet Coke, please.
--Sale Mac Muffin.
--Big Mac, con todo.
--Deme un Mac Burrito. (141)

The humorous language of this scene is, at the same time, unsettling for many Mexicans who see local cultural practices continually giving way to those of the United States.

Despite the seemingly pessimistic message found in the majority of La Malinche, the final scene offers hope to a Mexico that must engage with the past in the present. In this scene, Martín, the son of La Malinche and Hernán Cortés, appears on stage as a present-day Mexican elite wearing an Armani Suit. La Malinche, spotting her son, begs him to recognize and understand his mother:

MALINCHE. No juzgues a tu madre. Entiéndela. Sólo entiéndela. Y trata de verla en sueños.

MARTÍN. Mi madre está muerta.

MALINCHE. Vive.

MARTÍN. ¿Está loca?

MALINCHE. Vive por el rencor de muchos, por el odio de algunos, por el desprecio de tantos. No puede morir aunque quisiera. Vaga de noche hasta el amanecer. Está escondida en el alma de la madrugada. Sobrevive en el tiempo. Se lamenta por sus hijos. Está en la sombra, en la niebla, en el viento. (109)

MALINCHE. Don't judge your mother. Understand her. Just understand her. And try to see her in your dreams.

MARTÍN. My mother is dead.

MALINCHE. She lives.

MARTÍN. Are you crazy?

MALINCHE. She lives by the rancor of many, the hate of some, the disdain of so many. She can't die if she wanted to. She roams at night until the dawn. She's hidden in the soul of the dawn. She survives in time. She laments her children. She's in the shadow, the mist, and the wind.

As La Malinche attests, she cannot rest in peace until her children reconcile with their origins. However, in contrast with Octavio Paz's thesis, it is not the children who are ashamed of their mother, rather the mother of her children. Martín, the stereotypical Mexican economic elite, is too drawn to his own material success, rendering himself unable to recognize his own mother. By refusing to recognize his mother and embracing the culture of the gringos, Martín has turned his back on the autochthonous cultures of Mexico. By his association with the ruling elite, Martín can be found guilty of helping to usher in the new plagues of globalization and neoliberalism that threaten Mexico in La Malinche. It can be assumed that Martín, like most economic and political elite, would shop at a mall instead of a tianguis or attend Harvard instead of UNAM. The accusation is clear: Martín and his like-minded siblings are the modern day malinchistas.

Interestingly, in this work it is implied that while Martín has betrayed his people knowingly, La Malinche's transgression was only that of translating signs from one language to another:

ANALISTA. ¿Algún deseo?

MALINCHE. Quisiera el olvido.

ANALISTA. No la dejarán.

MALINCHE. Traducir es traicionar. Inventar otra verdad. (144)

ANALYST. Any desire?

MALINCHE. I would like forgetfulness.

ANALISTA. They won't let you be.

MALINCHE. To translate is to betray. It's inventing another truth.

La Malinche's statement emphasizes the danger of absolute truth claims within discourse. She could never successfully translate one sign for another without lying and inventing another truth. By correlation, La Malinche is asking her children to recognize that she too is a sign; an unstable signified operating within the present discursive system. She is neither the Virgin Mother nor the passive Chingada. Her crime against her children was neither an act of patriotism nor of treason. As an unstable sign operating within the complexities of present-day Mexico, La Malinche's identity cannot be fixed to one pole of a binary opposition.

La Malinche's plea to her children is to recognize the danger of a discourse that makes truth claims based on the erroneous assumption of the stability of signs. If her children were to understand that she is nothing but discourse, trapped in the present, she would be freed from the bonds of eternal torment. In addition, her children, the Mexican people, would also reap the benefits of an awareness of the artificiality of attributing absolute meaning to signs. The very words that promote neoliberalism and globalization—progress, freedom, choice, and equality—can be understood as part of an artificial system. The use and abuse of signs has dangerous consequences in the lives of Mexicans. The final words of the play suggest that it is not too late for the

children of La Malinche to reconcile with their mother and combat the discourse of a new and equally dangerous malinchismo:

ANALISTA. ¿Y sus hijos?

MALINCHE. Ya no los reconozco. Me los han cambiado. Yo no parí esos monstruos.

ANALISTA. ¿Y si intentan la reconciliación?

MALINCHE. Que me busquen, si quieren. Ahí estaré, como siempre, esperando su visita. (144)

ANALYST. And your children?

MALINCHE. I don't recognize them anymore. They've changed on me. I didn't give birth to those monsters.

ANALYST. And if they try to reconcile?

MALINCHE. Let them look for me, if they want. I'll be here, as always, waiting on their visit.

CHAPTER 4

Writing the Space Between: Sabina Berman's Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda

An audience without a history is not an audience. There is a sense in which history is audience, and the audience, history. (Blau 16)

In explaining what makes the dramatic form so distinct from other genres of literature, Marvin Carlson astutely states that one such reason is psychic polyphony, “[t]he multiple perception of presences,” that allows the spectator “a freedom of response quite different from and more inclusive than that offered by the printed text” (Semiotics 99). Carlson goes on to explain that these multiple presences can be anything from visual and auditory elements of the production to the “living presences of the actors, whose various psychic drives also ‘blend and clash’ in a particularly striking and powerful manner” (Semiotics 99). According to Carlson, this polyphony is “unquestionably a central feature in the particular power of the theatre” (Semiotics 99). Moreover, the audience also participates in this “blending and clashing” of psychic drives, bringing their own experiences and memories to the production in order to create meaning.

One striking example of a polyphonic performance is the character of Pancho Villa in Sabina Berman's critically and commercially successful play Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda [Between Pancho Villa and a Naked Woman] (1993). In this work, the relationships between four contemporary Mexicans are recreated in what would be a telling, if somewhat conventional, work of contemporary theatre—if not for the

complication that they spatially and anachronistically share the stage with the mythical Pancho Villa, whose very life seems to depend on the words and actions of the other four main characters. Memory, discourse, intertextuality, and history literally come alive on the stage as Pancho Villa is converted into a present figure, revived, rewritten, and rearmed by popular culture, historiography, and a discourse born of obsolete political and social paradigms. However, as the play progresses a site of contestation is revealed, a space where history and memory are problematized and the possibility for new social and political paradigms is born.

As can be seen in Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, history and theatre have always been connected, if not inseparable. The playwright and theorist Luis de Tavira summarizes the interconnectedness of theatre and history when he states that “[u]na historia de la teatralidad sería la historia del proceso que ha convertido al ser humano en espectador de la historia” ‘a history of theatricality would be the history of the process that has converted the human being in a spectator of history’ (29). Similarly, borrowing terminology traditionally associated more with the literary genre of drama than with the social science of history, Linda Hutcheon observes the growing awareness in contemporary literature and theory of the links that bind history with performance, asserting that “we only have representations of the past from which to construct our narratives or explanations. In a very real sense, postmodernism reveals a desire to understand present culture as the product of previous representations. The representation of history becomes the history of representation” (Politics 57-58).

Seemingly aware of this problematic relationship between history and representation, Sabina Berman has extensively reexamined the past and present in her

works Rompecabezas (1981), Herejía (1983), and Águila o sol (1985), in which “[t]he eschewal of realism, the combination of multiple, often contradictory points of view, and the irreverent portrayal of historical authorities serve Berman’s postmodern goal of destabilizing, deconstructing, and decentering historical knowledge” (Bixler, “Postmodernization” 45). Nonetheless, in Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, the audience is not asked to simply reexamine and question historical knowledge, for as Berman herself declares in an interview with Emily Hind, Entre Villa “según yo no es una obra histórica” ‘according to me is not a historic work’ (135).⁷ As a result, one must ask, then, why is Pancho Villa still walking the stage?

The interpretations of Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda are as varied as the social, political, and temporal backgrounds of the characters that interact on the stage. As Jacqueline Bixler points out, Berman’s is a theatre that “nos elude en términos de significado. Un texto que en la superficie nos puede parecer bastante sencillo siempre rinde multiples interpretaciones” ‘eludes us in terms of meaning. A text that on the surface can seem to be rather simple always offers multiple interpretations’ (“Introducción” 19). Referring specifically to Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, Sharon Magnarelli offers that it is an “analysis of the power of discursive practices and dramatizes how narrative (in the form of history, popular culture, or even the stories told us by others) author(ize)s the gender roles we cite and perform” (56). In another analysis of the play, Priscilla Meléndez notes that Berman “se atreve a atagonizar y parodiar dos metas claves de la historia política, económica y cultural de Hispanoamérica en general y

⁷ As I refer to the term “audience” and its role in creating meaning, it is important to remember Blau’s notion that the audience is “not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire. It does not exist before the play but is initiated or precipitated by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed” (18).

de México en particular: el deseo revolucionario y el ansia de la modernidad” ‘dares to antagonize and parody two key goals of the cultural, economic, and political history of Spanish America in general and of Mexico in particular: revolutionary desire and anxiety provoked by modernity’ (525). Contextualizing the work within the economic and political climate of neoliberalism in which it was created and received, Stuart Day examines how “[i]n Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda [. . .], Sabina Berman responds to this relatively new, ambiguous political climate in Mexico and the need for the left to move forward by forming new political alliances” (37). These three representative analyses, along with many other published articles about this play, all explore the problematic spatial and temporal positioning of the character of Pancho Villa and its ramifications on the semiotic and symbolic levels of the collective conscious of Mexicans.

Yet it seems that Pancho Villa’s apparition on the stage is more than a discursive slight of hand, suggesting that his presence is a very real menace to the lives of the characters and, by extension, those of the audience. In Entre Villa this manifestation of the past changes the present while, conversely, the characters from the present also change the past. What begins as a representation of the contradictory nature of quotidian contemporary gender and national politics becomes a dramatized history of the making of political and sexual paradigms that continually give life to a past that has dangerous consequences in the lives of present-day Mexicans.

Interestingly, in order to dramatize these themes, Berman chooses to place the action in an apartment in Condesa, a middle-class neighborhood in Mexico City. The apartment belongs to Gina, a seemingly likeable woman who is starting a maquiladora,

the assembly plants predominately located along the United States border, that are harbingers of globalization, often importing raw goods only to export the assembled product. Gina's longtime lover, Adrián, is a middle-aged history professor whose left-leaning political orientation coexists alongside his machista rhetoric and nature. Gina and Adrián's relationship, always defined by a lack of commitment, enters into a state of crisis when Gina pushes for the two to live together and have a baby, a particularly risky move as it seems Adrián is supposedly more concerned with the welfare of the masses than with paying his monthly child support. As the couple's relationship begins to collapse, Gina falls in love with Ismael, a sensitive friend of her son whose penchant for wearing an earring and blue jeans underscores his youth and lack of experience. Ismael designs wooden toy blocks at the maquiladora owned by Gina and her friend Andrea. Of importance, the energetic Andrea greatly resembles her grandfather Plutarco Elías Calles, one the founders of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario which would later be renamed the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI).⁸ Gina eventually becomes frustrated with Adrián's long absences and lack of commitment. She moves out to live with Ismael, leaving the apartment to her friend Andrea, but not before Gina helps to prepare Adrián's manuscript on the history of Pancho Villa and the Mexican Revolution.

The manuscript on the life of Villa is an obsession for Adrián, who admits, “[l]a verdad llevo las notas sobre Villa a todas partes. Estoy en una reunión del consejo del periódico, y discretamente estoy dibujando en mi cuaderno sombreritos norteros. Pienso en Villa hasta dormido” ‘I’ve been carrying my notes on Villa around everywhere. I was at a board meeting for the paper and I’m discretely doodling sombreros. I’ve got Villa on

⁸ The interesting choice of Elías Calles in a play about power and politics in Mexico is that in the years after his presidency, he slowly moved from leftist revolutionary to extreme right-winger, leading to his deportation to the United States in 1936.

the brain even when I'm sleeping' (24).⁹ The writing of this book, Adrián's attempt to capture the life of Pancho Villa better than any other work previously written, brings to the forefront the concept of intertextuality, both as a leitmotiv in the play and a commentary on reality. Extradramatically, even the title of the play, Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, serves as a reference to Ecuadorian's Jorge Adoum's novel Entre Marx y una mujer desnuda (1976). Priscilla Meléndez offers that, through Villa's presence on the stage combined with clear examples of intertextuality, "podremos apreciar cómo Berman recurre a la simultánea inserción y desplazamiento de fantasmas de la historia política, cultural y literaria de México y de otros lugares, parodiándose tanto el pasado revolucionario como el presente posmoderno y neoliberal" 'we can appreciate how Berman uses as recourse the simultaneous insertion and displacement of phantoms of the political, cultural, and literary history of Mexico and of other places, parodying the revolutionary past as much as the postmodern present' (528). The phantoms of which Meléndez speaks have a unique representative in Berman's Pancho Villa, whose presence in the play "establece un contrapunteo entre la noción de cambio radical y la noción de enraizamiento y estaticismo, fuerzas antagónicas que permean tanto la historia mexicana colectiva y pretérita como la personal y presente" 'establishes a counterpoint between the notion of radical change and that of entrenchment and staticism, antagonistic forces that permeate collective and past Mexican history as much as personal and present history' (528). The space between public collective and singular personal memories is the locus of meaning that the audience brings to this dramatic performance.

⁹ All translations of the play are mine. There is an English language adaptation of the play entitled Between Pancho Villa and a Naked Woman translated by Shelley Tepperman and published in TheatreForum (See works cited). However, given that the translated text varies greatly from the dramatic text on which this study is based, I will only use Tepperman's adaptation as a reference.

The function of memory, at both the subjective and cultural levels, is central to theatre for, as Herbert Blau explains, theater is “a function of remembrance. Where memory is, theater is. It represents, for better or worse, an engrained form of partial knowledge, having features of an absence that is a failure of memory” (382). That is to say, theatre operates in this space between memory and oblivion, presence and absence, operating as a bridge between past and present in which knowledge is transferred and meaning is created. In a similar way, the theories of Carlson on psychic polyphony with different memories and “psychic drives” colliding in the theatre, offer a way of understanding how meaning is already endowed upon characters, scenarios, and the actors themselves. In a later work, the title of which could easily be applied to the play at hand, The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine, Carlson expands his ideas on audience and dramatic interaction. Of particular import to this study is the idea of “ghosting,” “[t]he process of using the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena” (6). While recognizing this process as universal in all reception theories of art, Carlson posits that it is one of the characteristic features of theatre in which the audience is presented with “the identical thing they have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context. Thus, recognition not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes a part of the reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably” (7).

In Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda the Revolutionary hero carries with him layers of intertextuality given that the playwright indicates that he is “el Villa mítico de las

películas mexicanas de los años cincuentas, sesentas y setentas. Perfectamente viril, con una facilidad portentosa para la violencia o el sentimentalismo” ‘the mythological Pancho Villa straight out of Mexican films from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s [. . .] Perfectly virile, with an extraordinary ability to suddenly turn violent or sentimental’ (15). Therefore, the Villa on the stage is based on a “Villa” as portrayed in a specific period in a particular art form—in this case the cinema. This characterization brings to the foreground the epistemologically provisional nature of the Pancho Villa the audience observes onstage. Furthermore, Magnarelli suggests that Berman was quite aware of this when creating the character since in Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda

the Villa who provides his citational performance model is already a narrative creation/citation, product of numerous historiographers, including Adrián himself, who have necessarily rewritten, re-cited the ‘original’ as a result of their own present (temporal and physical) circumstances and audience. (61)

Therefore, the Villa on stage is created from previous citations, texts in the Barthian sense of the word, as remembered, evoked, and performed both physically and psychically by the playwright, the director, the actors, and the audience.

Interestingly, Wehling also notes the seemingly never-ending chain of textual references in “historical” portrayals of Pancho Villa. “Curiously in his college textbook, The Epic of Latin America, John Crow’s major depiction of the Mexican Revolution and Pancho Villa comes from Mariano Azuela’s Los de abajo; he cites fiction as reality, much in the same way Berman’s character Adrián writes his text on Villa and the Revolution” (78). That is to say Pancho Villa, as seen on the stage or explained in the pages of a history textbook, exists only as a citation constantly waiting to be reinterpreted and revived, continuing an endless sequence of intertextual signs.

The citational and provisional nature of the characterization Pancho Villa is underscored when one takes into account the stagings of Entre Villa outside of Mexico. In an interview with Francine A’Ness, Berman herself states, “a mí, la visión de Pancho Villa en las producciones anglosajonas que he visto me ha dejado siempre insatisfecha [. . .] en todas estas puestas consistentemente Pancho Villa era visto como chistoso” ‘for me, the vision of Pancho Villa in the anglosaxon productions that I’ve seen has always left me unsatisfied [. . .] in all these stagings Pancho Villa was consistently seen as funny’ (56). Without a doubt, in trademark Berman fashion, Entre Villa offers the audience many moments of comic relief. Nonetheless, the presence of Villa is not meant to be that of a humorous caricature. Berman’s interviewer asks if in the Anglo-Saxon stagings Villa is portrayed “¿[c]omo una especie de dibujo animado tal como Speedy González?” ‘[l]ike some kind of cartoon character like Speedy González?’ (56). Berman concurs, pointing out that in these productions Villa loses his power as a symbol of machismo because he

carecía de amenaza real. En la producción en México, en la que yo dirigí, Pancho Villa era una figura muy amenazante y era un tipo de uno ochenta de estatura y muy fuerte. Traía una pistola que disparaba, no de veras, pero que hacía ruido como si fuera de veras. Porque para mí el machismo, en mi vida personal y en la vida de mis congéneres, que conozco, no es una fuerza ridícula, es una fuerza muy amenazante que conduce a mucho dolor. Se le puede ver el lado ridículo, pero es una fuerza, fuerza real, muy viva. (A’Ness 56)

lacked any real threat. In the Mexican production, the one I directed, Pancho Villa was a very threatening figure and he was very strong guy, a meter-eighty tall. He carried a pistol that fired, not really, but made a lot of noise as if it were real. Because for me, machismo, in my personal life and the life of people from my generation that I know, is not a ridiculous force. It is a very threatening force that causes a lot of pain. One can see the ridiculous side to it, but it is a force, very real, very alive.

The emotional nature in which Berman describes the representative threat of the dramatic Pancho Villa emphasizes the role of memory in this play and, indeed, all theatre. The phenomenon of ghosting is not possible without memory given that theatre “is the repository of cultural memory, but, like the memory of each individual, it also subject to continual adjustment and modification as the memory is recalled in new circumstances and contexts” (Carlson Haunted 2). The specter-like presence of Pancho Villa, this metaphorical threat that carries with it years of experiences and memories, is obviously a theatrical technique that Berman uses to speak of the present. However, one must ask why is the inclusion of the mythical Pancho Villa so effective on the audience? What is the nature of Villa’s presence in this play?

The answers to these questions can be found in the dramatic interactions between the characters and Villa. In particular, the patronizingly didactic Adrián has a particular link with the general, as their actions and thoughts seemingly intertwined. The temporal and psychic interconnectivity of the characters is created through a

juego escénico que permite convivir dos tiempos históricos. Sin mayor explicación Villa y la Mujer de época revolucionaria pueden tomar té en esa sala contemporánea. Igualmente, Villa y su madre pueden pasearse por la sala, usando el espacio como si se tratara de campo abierto; de ahí que sean plausibles las acotaciones que indican que Gina al fumar un cigarro en su sala echa el humo sobre Villa y Villa comenta que hasta ahí llega el humo del campo de batalla, o que Villa toma de la mesita donde Gina escribe a máquina la botella de tequila y bebe de ella. (17)

scenic technique that permits two historical times to coexist. Without any explanation necessary, Villa and the Woman from the revolutionary period can drink tea in this contemporary living room. Likewise, Villa and his mother can stroll through the living room, using the space as if it were an open field; that’s what makes plausible the stage directions that indicate when Gina smokes a cigarette in her living room she blows smoke on Villa and Villa comments that smoke is coming all the way from the battlefield to where he is, or that Villa grabs and drinks the bottle of tequila from the table where Gina is typing.

Of great importance in this stage design is that it complicates the traditional causal relationship between past and present. In positivistic understandings of time, past events lay a foundation for the present in which we live. Interestingly, this process is diachronically reversed in Entre Villa. Magnarelli observes that “[w]e expect the past to impact the present; it is unusual for a playwright to focus on the reverse, on the fact that narrativity is inevitably dependent on the present as much as on the past to the extent that the present has been classified as telos” (62). This poststructural teleology, born of the epistemological complications suggested by a reality that is known only through discourse, draws attention to not only the ways in which we know the events of the past but also to what ends different historiographic portrayals of the past are both informed by and employed for the uses of the politically dominant.

Bixler observes the connection of Adrián’s understood affiliation with a perceived stagnant left-leaning PRI, a class of “prisaurios,” roughly translated to English as ‘PRI-a-sauruses,’ stating that “[w]hen considered within the context of recent political history, Entre Villa reveals striking similarities between Adrián’s behavior and that of the political party that has ruled Mexico since the late 1920s. Both resort and refer to their own masculinity as a form of dominant political discourse” (“Power” 88). This dominant political discourse finds both foundation and inspiration in the revolutionary hero Pancho Villa as portrayed in post-apocryphal sources like the manuscript in which Adrián admits:

Concretamente quisiera ya estar cabalgando con el Centauro rumbo a la ciudad de México. Villa seguido de la División del Norte. Un ejército resbalando hasta la ciudad. Un ejército de desharrapados: un pueblo de desharrapados precipitándose sobre la “Ciudad de los palacios”. Todos estos cabrones muertos de hambre viniendo a cobrarse lo que es suyo de los politiqueros tranzas y perfumados y hijos de la chingada. (24-25)

I'd love to be on horseback with The Centaur riding towards Mexico City. Villa followed by his men, the Division of the North; an army galloping towards the city. A ragtag army: a ragtag people rushing into the City of Palaces. All those poor starving sons of bitches coming to demand what's rightly theirs from the corrupt bourgeois pussy politicians, sons of bitches.

In this short description of his work, it becomes apparent that Adrián's book is an example of "a historical narrative based more on desire than reality" (Wehling 77). Even Adrián's intellectual language begins to change as he loses himself in an emotion-charged rant. In the last sentence of the previous fragment, Adrián's pronunciation changes and his voice seems to become that of Villa's, once more highlighting the bonds between the two characters.

Gina, continually trying to gain favor with Adrián in order to convince him to settle down with her, offers to type Adrián's manuscript. Not only does her action not change the incorrigible Adrián, she reinforces the gendered roles of man as author of ideas and woman as stenographer and typist. Gina's willingness to contribute to Adrián's reconstruction of the past stands in direct opposition to her present occupation of setting up a maquiladora. In yet another commentary of the web of spatial and temporal connections found in the play, the majority of maquiladoras drive the economy, albeit in dubious ways, of the same northern region of Mexico that gave life to Villa's Northern Army. Obsessed with the past and incapable of understanding the complex nature of any assessment of the maquiladoras' economic and social impact, Adrián belittles Gina's work, associating it with the selling out of the homeland to neoliberal interests:

ADRIÁN. No. No me interesa tu trabajo. Especialmente no, cuando estás montando una maquiladora; es decir, cuando te afilias al vendabal [sic] neoliberal que está desgraciando a este país.

GINA. Estamos dándole trabajo a la gente.

ADRIÁN. No. Están esclavizándolos. (26-27)

ADRIÁN. No. I'm not interested in your work. Especially when you're setting up a sweatshop, when you're becoming part of the neoliberal tornado ravaging this country.

GINA. We're creating jobs for people.

ADRIAN. No. You're enslaving them.

The issue of the role that the maquiladoras play is much too complex to be summarized by the simplistic point and counterpoint that Adrián and Gina offer. However, it is Adrián who finds a way to tie history, machismo, nationalism, and contemporary politics into his verbal attack in order to bypass any educated argument against the maquiladoras. Linking the family lineage of Gina's friend and business partner to the past of the Mexican Revolution, Adrián argues that:

ADRIÁN. [. . .] Por algo tu socia, ¿cómo se llama?

GINA. Andrea Elías.

ADRIÁN. Elías Calles: nieta del máximo traidor a la Revolución.

GINA. Si la conocieras...

ADRIÁN. La asesino. Como voy a asesinar veinte veces a su abuelito en mi libro. (27)

ADRIAN. And that partner of yours...what's her name again?

GINA. Andrea Elías.

ADRIAN. Elías Calles, granddaughter of the supreme traitor to the revolution.

GINA. If you met her, you wouldn't...

ADRIAN. I'd kill her just like I'm going to kill her grandfather twenty times over in my book.

Adrián's verbal violence, a combination of misogyny and macho nationalism, certainly underscores the passion with which he argues. However, as the play progresses one discovers that Adrián has internalized the language and tone of the citationally performing Pancho Villa.

Metatheatrically acting out Adrián's account of an encounter between Villa and a upper-class daughter of a counterrevolutionary general, Gina and her lover make comments like two moviegoers, popping candy in their mouths as they make comments and direct the performance before them:

VILLA. Es usted muy bonita.

ADRIÁN. Era una mujer muy bonita.

VILLA. Es usted requete preciosa, qué recondenada suerte.

MUJER. Tómese el té, mi general.

GINA. Y luego se duerme entre mis brazos.

MUJER. Y luego se duerme entre mis brazos. (31)

VILLA. You are very pretty.

ADRIÁN. She was a very pretty woman.

VILLA. You are soooo precious, what damned luck.

WOMAN. Drink your tea, my general.

GINA. And then you'll fall asleep in my arms.

WOMAN. And then you'll fall asleep in my arms.

Underlining the psychic connection between Adrián and his hero, Villa verbally attacks the woman he just complimented, declaring "es usted requete primorosa ..., pero contrarrevolucionaria" 'you are soooo classy..., but also counterrevolutionary' (31). As

if to underscore the parallels between the lives of Villa/Adrián and Gina/La Mujer, Gina offers a way out of the ideological conflict of interest, countering that it shouldn't matter, since "[e]lla es ella" 'she is who she is' (31). Nonetheless, Villa drinks his tea, pulls out his pistol, and kills the woman in cold blood. In horror, Gina demands to know why this woman was killed, to which Adrián responds, "Porque tengo que irme" 'Because I have to go' (32). The connections between Villa and Adrián, as well as Gina and the women of Villa's world, become a thematic thread that runs through the entire play.

The link that connects Villa with the lives of the contemporary characters is Adrián's manuscript. It is worth noting that as Gina types the manuscript, Adrián continues to disappear for longer and longer periods, resulting in Gina's decision to pursue other romantic interests. As the task of typing and editing the manuscript comes to an end, Gina opts for the inexperienced yet attentive Ismael. For Gina the manuscript is not only a work to be completed but also an act offered in hopes of gaining Adrián's favor. While formally used as an excuse for Adrián's lack of romantic attention, once completed Adrián becomes even more negligent of Gina's needs. While for Gina the completion of the manuscript represents one more obstacle to a fulfilling relationship with Adrián, it is actually the manifestation and validation of Adrián's worldview based on an imagined past incongruently extended into the present.

After a particularly trying absence of three months, Gina confronts Adrián who tries to convince her that everything can be fixed. Villa encourages Adrián, reminding him that "[a]unque no parezca está cediendo. No más toque las cuerdas más poquito a poco y de pronto canta" '[e]ven if it does not look like it, she's giving in. Just play her

strings softly—any minute now she'll start to sing' (58). However, Gina finally begins the process of ridding herself of Adrián and the presence of Pancho Villa that he carries:

GINA. Adrián...Estoy enamorada.

Larga pausa.

VILLA. Ingrata...

Villa se vuelve. Trae una puñalada en la espalda.

ADRIÁN. General.

VILLA. No es nada, pinche cuchillito, orita me lo saco. (*Empieza a intentar zafarse el puñal.*) (58)

GINA. Adrian...I'm in love.

Long pause.

VILLA. You ingrate.

Villa turns around. He has a knife in his back.

ADRIAN. My general!

VILLA. It's nothing, just a fucking knife. I'll get it out. (He starts trying to pull out the knife.)

Each time Gina refutes and rejects Adrián, the body of Pancho Villa is riddled with a wound, each more deadly than the previous. These attacks grow proportionately with Gina's growing confidence and liberation from a fear that has plagued her for all her life. Bringing to mind the connections Sabina Berman makes between the menacing physical presence of Pancho Villa and the very real threat that machismo has over so many women in contemporary Mexico, Gina declares:

GINA. Le he tenido miedo a cada uno de los hombres a quienes amé. A mi padre, a mi hermano. A Julián. A ti.

ADRIÁN. Pero ¿por qué?

Gina lo piensa arduamente.

GINA. Porque, no sé...Porque son más grandotes que yo. (66)

GINA. I've been afraid of every man I've ever loved. Of my father, of my brother. Of Julián. Of you.

ADRIAN. But why?

Gina thinks hard.

GINA. Because...I don't know...Because you're all bigger than me. (66)

As Villa and Adrián struggle to win back Gina, it becomes apparent that they will go down fighting. Adrián falls back on macho rhetoric, mocking Ismael's age, sexual experience, and lack of potential to make money in order to provide for her. With each rhetorical shot from Gina, the alliance between Adrián and Villa weakens. In frustration, Adrián points out the flaw in their current method of attack, "No le puedo exigir nada, general. Es una mujer pensante. Se gana sola la vida. ¿Con qué la obligo?" 'I can't make her, my general. She's a thinking woman. She earns her own living. How can I make her?' (61). Although Adrián sees the desperateness of the situation, Villa cannot grasp the new realities about him as he replies to Adrián's question stating, "¿Cómo que con qué? (*Se toca entre las ingles...*) Con el sentimiento." 'What do you mean how? (*He touches his crotch.*) With feelings' (62). Adrián's frustration with his mythological idol grows and he turns rank shouting, "Por eso perdió el poder, general, por la terquedad de no saber negociar" 'That's why you lost power, my general, because you were too stubborn to negotiate' (62). The result of Adrián's exasperation only riddles Villa with more bullets.

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see Adrián's perfidy as a change in his worldview. As the action progresses, Adrián and Villa seem incapable of grasping and adapting to the new realities with which they are confronted. Moreover, Adrián begins to confuse desire, memory, and history so much that, in his eyes, Gina begins to lose her vitality while Villa becomes more and more real. In the third act, Adrián gazes at Gina and sees a beauty that seemingly he has never noticed before:

ADRIÁN. ¿Sabes?: en esta luz crepuscular te ves...especialmente...

VILLA. Verde.

ADRIÁN. Bella. Como una estatua...

VILLA. De cobre oxidado.

ADRIÁN. Bella y...

VILLA. Verde. (65)

ADRIAN. You know what, in the light of the sunset you
look...especially...

VILLA. Green.

ADRIAN. Beautiful. Like a statue...

VILLA. Made of oxidized copper.

ADRIAN. Beautiful and...

VILLA. Green.

Adrián and Pancho Villa's commentaries on the statuesque quality of a living woman are attempts to convert the living into the memorialized. This endeavor, like the rhetorical challenges they offer before, has no effect on Gina. Although they try to freeze time by venerating Gina, converting her into an image that is less threatening and, therefore, more controllable, they cannot possess what they so desire given Gina's new found resistance

to Adrián's verbal virtuosity. The impotence of the pair to control the object of their desire reflects the very same desires of Adrián to control the mythological Villa.

As Adrián's continues to lose power over his lover, Gina declares, "Ahora por fin tengo confianza en un hombre, pero por desgracia no eres tú" 'Now I finally trust a man, but unfortunately it isn't you,' (66), leading Adrián and Villa to use the ultimate weapons in their arsenals. Mirroring each others movements,

Villa toma la cache de su pistola. Adrián mete la mano en la bolsa de su impermeable. Adrián desembolsa, como un revólver, su libro. Villa desenfunda y dispara: no hay balas. (67)

Villa puts his hand on his pistol. Adrián puts his hand in the pocket of his raincoat. Adrián takes out, like a revolver, his book. Villa draws and fires: there are no bullets.

While slightly interested in the book, Gina mocks this pathetic display, humorously observing, "En la contraportada tú, al escritorio. Te ves muy interesante. Y muy guapo. La tipografía es perfecta. *Currier* de once puntos. Muy legible" 'You on the back cover, at your desk. You look very interesting. And very handsome. The typeface is perfect. Eleven point courier. Very legible' (68). Adrián, once again digging deep to find the remnants of the pride that Gina has torn to pieces, corrects her adding that the typeface is "*Currier* super" 'Super courier' (68). Along with Villa running out of ammunition, Adrián is running out of discursive options to capture back Gina.

Adrián then informs Gina that he has dedicated the book to her, a logical display of gratitude given Gina's selfless labor of typing and editing the book. For the first time in a while, there seems to be an opening for Adrián since Gina is sincerely moved by the display of affection. However, upon opening the book she discovers that he has only jotted on the first page the words "A una querida amiga, apasionada como yo de Pancho

Villa” “To a dear friend, as passionate about Pancho Villa as I’ (69). This humorous exchange underscores the seductive power of the elusive discourse used by Adrián and those of his political and intellectual ilk. However, once the truth is revealed and Adrián is called to issue and must admit the intentionally hollow meaning of his words, the second act ends in a humiliating histrionic performance that makes Villa literally die of shame:

GINA. ¿Podrías ya irte? ¿Adrián?

VILLA. ¿Podrías ya torcerle el cogote, Adrián?

Adrián corre hacia el ventanal y salta. Larga pausa. Gina corre al ventanal, lo cierra, se vuelve, boquiabierta.

GINA. Pero si siempre he vivido en planta baja.

Villa se desploma, muerto por fin, de vergüenza. (71)

GINA. Would you leave already? Adrián?

VILLA. Would you wring her neck already, Adrián?

Adrián runs to the window and jumps out. A long pause. Gina runs to the window and shuts it closed. She turns around, her mouth hanging open.

GINA. But I’ve always lived on the ground floor!

VILLA collapses, dead at last, of shame.

This scene is where the audience perceives Gina’s complete liberation from a relationship founded on Adrián’s chauvinistic attitudes. Through her relationship with Ismael, a man who lives in the present, Gina sees Adrián’s hypocrisy and his misplaced obsession with a past created by his own desire. Adrián’s power over Gina has been depleted by her newfound strength in an identity freed from a discourse which is as out of place in the

present as Adrián's Pancho Villa is on the stage. By freeing herself of Adrián, his language, and the identity he has imposed on her,

Gina conoce una auténtica catarsis de lenguaje, enfrenta poco a poco la renovación del discurso de la identidad, no tanto como género o modo de escritura sino [. . .] como propuesta de una forma de lectura o entendimiento del sujeto, de su ansiedad referencial a través de la figura de ficción. (Martínez de Olcoz 10).

Gina experiences an authentic catharsis of language, little by little she confronts the renovation of the discourse of identity, not so much as genre or mode of writing but [. . .] as the proposal of a form of reading and understanding the subject and her referential anxiety through a fictional figure.

The consequence of this discursive liberation is that Adrián, like Villa, loses all influence and power over Gina. The ridiculous exit of Adrián and Villa's anticlimactic death shed light where before there were only shadows of a distant past.

The juxtaposition of the textually based Villa, Adrián's book based on historical and gendered desire, and the resistance offered by Gina creates a space between what Jacques LeGoff classifies as the "two histories: that of collective memory and that of historians. The first appears as essentially mythic, deformed, and anachronistic. But it constitutes the lived reality of the never-completed relation between present and past" (111). One can consider Adrián's book on Villa as an example of the work of traditional historiography. As Adrián looks to recreate the past—if only in the pages of his book—he does not realize how his "history" is as much a commentary on the present as it is on the past. Furthermore, Adrián is complicit in recreating a past upon an endless chain of intertextual references, ghosts from the past that serve the very masters that give them life. The connection between history, fiction, and the power of discourse is a theme often

explored in postmodern works like Entre Villa. Linda Hutcheon points out that by questioning how we know the past, postmodern works have taught us that

both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past (“exertions of the shaping, ordering imagination”). In other words, the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past “events” into present historical “facts.” This is not a “dishonest refuge from truth” but an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs. (Poetics 89; emphasis in original)

Just as Gina finally has the courage to challenge the baseless foundation of Adrián’s discourse, the overtly intertextual depiction of Villa onstage “lays bare,” to borrow the formalist term, the very devices that conversely give power to, as well as draw strength from, this particular version of Villa and all he represents. This affirms Wehling’s observation that in this play “Adrián needs Villa, Villa needs Adrián, History desires Myth, Myth begs veracity through History” (73). The circular nature of the meaning-making paradigm on which Adrián justifies his performance as historian, intellectual, citizen, and lover is finally broken when it is shown to be based more on desire than any irrefutable historical knowledge. As a result of this rupture, a space is opened in which past and present “truths” are destabilized.

The third and final act opens with Adrián at the door of Gina’s old apartment, now inhabited by her friend Andrea. Andrea, factory owner and granddaughter of Elías Calles represents, alongside Ismael with his “neoliberal credentials,” the two characters that seem to offer an escape from the past with its stagnant discourses (Day 47). Just as Ismael has offered Gina a way to break with history and live in the present, Andrea tries to seduce Adrián from the perspective of a present in which Andrea’s grandfather, like Pancho Villa, “[y]a está hecho ceniza” ‘he’s already a pile of ashes’ (84). However,

Adrián cannot seem to separate the past from the present, seeing only the image of Plutarco Elías Calles instead of the woman before him in the present. Still obsessed with Gina and now with writing a biography that would smear Andrea's grandfather, Adrián begins to question the foundations of all the he holds so dear:

ADRIÁN. De veras no sé qué hacer conmigo mismo. Lo de Gina, haber terminado lo de Villa también. Me quedé sin proyecto de vida... No hay héroes vivos alrededor nuestro; la revolución está muerta: la de 1910, la asesinó precisamente tu abuelito [. . .] Y la revolución de mi generación, ni siquiera la hicimos... (81-82)

ADRIAN. The truth is, I don't know what to do with myself. The thing with Gina and having finished the Villa book too. I was left without any life plan. These days we don't have any living heroes in our midst; the revolution is dead: it was actually your grandfather who killed the 1910 revolution. And the revolution my generation promised didn't even happen...

It seems that in this moment Adrián, like Gina before him, has the opportunity to liberate himself from the past, Pancho Villa's "dead revolution," and his steadfast belief in his generation's revolution that "didn't even happen." Nonetheless, Adrián is incapable of moving on. His paralysis prevents him from joining the present with all its new problems and opportunities. Gazing at Andrea, much like he did at the "statuesque" Gina, Adrián cannot stop seeing specters of Mexico's and Andrea's past:

Se te forman sombras curiosas. (*Tocándole el rostro con el dedo índice.*) Alrededor de los ojos, por ejemplo, de manera que los ojos se te ven más negros. Como si de valeriana. Chiquitos y de valeriana negra, casi azul: como los de él. Y en el labio superior, es decir: arriba del labio superior, tienes otra sombra, y parecería que llevas, como el general, un bigotito. (82)

Weird shadows are forming on you. (*Touching her face with his index finger.*) Around your eyes, for example, in such a way that your eyes seem blacker. Almost like onyx. Like tiny pieces of black onyx, almost blue, like his. And above your upper lip, you have another shadow, and it looks like you have—just like General Elías Calles—a little moustache.

Adrián's obsession with her grandfather notwithstanding, Andrea moves toward Adrián and tries to seduce him, kissing the immobile Adrián who can only ponder how he will write his his book on Andrea's grandfather. Seemingly gaining in confidence, Adrián carries her offstage as a pallid, bullet-ridden Villa enters mounted atop an enormous cannon that stretches the length of the stage seemingly ready to reaffirm his power. It seems the past as written by Adrián will triumph over Andrea and the past.

Already weakened by Gina's liberation, Villa pulls out the proverbial "big gun," lighting the wick on the powerful cannon. Awaiting another violent power play, Villa is once again ashamed as end of the cannon bends toward the ground releasing a tiny cannonball. Andrea, furious, realizes what the audience has known all along: Adrián, obsessed with past heroes and loves, is incapable of seizing the present. This is the last time the audience sees Pancho Villa. Condemned to a palid, specter-like presence, Villa does indeed live. However, he has been disarmed, made impotent as Gina and Andrea have shown Villa for what he is: nothing more than a citational myth.

CHAPTER 5

The Gap between Historiography and Fiction: Ignacio Solares' Madero, el otro

¿Cómo entender la historia sin los elementos inconscientes que contiene, que contiene todo lo humano? (251)

How does one understand history without its unconscious elements, elements that everything human has?

Viewed as one of the more revered and enigmatic figures in Mexico's history of colorful rulers, Francisco Madero's assassination in 1913 ushered in one of the most violent periods of the Mexican Revolution. A spiritualist fascinated with Asian religions, Madero surely cut a strange figure as a vegetarian, pacifist, and reluctant revolutionary leader. As the presidential candidate of the Partido Nacional Antireeleccionista, the National Antireelectionist Party, Madero became a leading figure in the movement to remove Porfirio Díaz from the presidency that he essentially had held since 1876. Losing the fraudulent elections of 1910 to Díaz, the spiritualist escaped from prison, going to the United States where he wrote, alongside other exiles, the Plan de San Luis Potosí calling the Mexican nation to arms in order to restore democracy. As called for in the Plan, the Mexican Revolution began on November 20, 1910. With Díaz in exile, a year later Madero was elected president of Mexico. Unfortunately for the new president and the nation, the exhilaration of this glimpse into restored democracy would prove to be as ephemeral as the voices from beyond the grave with which Madero often communicated.

Assassinated under the orders of the general and former ally Victoriano Huerta, Madero is mostly remembered as an idealist, betrayed by the more conservative and radical elements of the political class. As Juana Vásquez notes, “Madero was never able to consolidate his presidency. He had enemies on all sides” (112-13). As a result, Madero is commonly viewed in contemporary Mexico as a weak leader who did not grasp the extent of treasonous plans taking place under his watch. While these historical and political questions have inspired numerous studies into the biography of Madero and his political beliefs, there remains an aura of mystery that surrounds the leader’s lifelong quest to explore all questions spiritual, paranormal, and metaphysical. In the thoroughly historically researched novel, Madero, el otro (1989), published in English as Madero’s Judgement (1999), the president is questioned and challenged by narrative voices probing Madero’s actions and their future consequences. While the eponymous title of the novel would seem to suggest a biographic reconstruction of the events of the leader’s life, Alfonso González points out that in Madero, el otro “[a]unque hay muchas citas históricas y de revistas de la época, el énfasis no está en recrear un tiempo pasado sino en explorar la psique de un hombre” ‘while there are many quotes that are historical and from magazines from the period, the emphasis is not on recreating the past but rather on exploring the psyche of a man’ (118). Although Ignacio Solares approached the writing of this novel with historiographic rigor—as can be observed in the extensive bibliography found at the end of the book—the authorial voice in the postscript titled “Nota,” “Note,” states that “[t]otal, lo que importa es el halo que dejan los hechos, más que los hechos mismos” ‘[i]n all, the important thing is the aura that the events leave behind, rather than the events themselves’ (250).¹⁰ In Madero, el otro the aim of the narration is squarely on

¹⁰ English translations of the primary text will be taken from Madero’s Judgement. However, because the

the “aura” of events past, reflecting Linda Hutcheon’s claim that “[k]nowing the past becomes a question of representing, that is, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording” (Politics 74). Interestingly, like most works of historiographic metafiction, the emphasis in this novel shifts from a traditional reconstruction of the past to a construction of the past that underscores the narrative processes through which it is mediated.

While seeking to get to what the authorial voice calls “lo simbólicamente verdadero” “the symbolically truthful,” in Madero, el otro the traditional temporal, epistemological, and ontological aspects of historiography and fiction are problematized so that the reader is constantly reminded of the interconnectivity among Madero (the mystic), “el otro” Madero (the politician who must make pragmatic decisions), the narrator(s), and the Mexican people. The interplay among these various agents opens up a space, an “intervalo” or “gap” in the words of the authorial voice (249), which not only provides a fascinating look at the relationship between history and fiction, but also highlights the interconnectivity of events, locals, and personages separated by both space and time.

In the “Nota,” the authorial voice plays with intertextuality, present throughout the narration, connecting the novelist’s role in writing history with the texts that influenced the life of Madero. Using a Hindu text that Madero himself had studied, the authorial voice lays the foundation on which his construction of the leader is based:

Quizá, la ventaja del novelista es que puede colocarse en un intervalo, como dice el poema metafísico indio, Vijñana Bhairava: ‘En el momento en que se perciben dos cosas, tomando conciencia del intervalo entre ellas, hay que ahincarse en ese intervalo. Si se eliminan simultáneamente las

postscript “Nota” does not appear in the translated text, all translations from the original “Nota” will be mine.

dos cosas, entonces en ese intervalo, resplandece la Realidad,' proposición que no le hubiera disgustado al propio Madero, tan amante de lo hindú. (249)

Perhaps, the novelist's advantage is that he can place himself in a gap or interval, as the metaphysical Indian poem, *Vijñāna Bhairava*, says: 'At the moment when one has perception or knowledge of two objects or ideas, one should simultaneously banish both perceptions or ideas and apprehending the gap or interval between the two, show mentally stick to it (i.e. the gap). In that gap will Reality flash forth suddenly [Singh 58],' a proposition that Madero himself would not have minded, being such a lover of all things Hindu.

The idea that reality lies between two contesting perceptions or ideas underscores the authorial voice's goal of creating a literary construction of Madero that contests traditional portrayals that do not truly capture the man's essence. Much like the path to enlightenment in the poem cited by the authorial voice, the reader comes to a deeper understanding of Madero through the dialectic exchange among the multiple identities to which the president has been assigned.

In this exploration, the relationship between readers and texts is of great importance. Douglas Weatherford declares that in the novel "[i]t is clear that Madero, like Solares himself, does not look on reading as merely an aesthetic exercise. Indeed, Madero's voyage from bookworm to revolutionary challenges any view that would define reading as passive" (78). The leitmotif of the influence of texts on the leader's, and correspondingly the reader's, life is present throughout the narration, highlighting the connections between reading and reality. Interestingly, during his research of the notebooks penned by Madero, Ignacio Solares discovered a prophetic description of the leader's death in the hands of his enemies: "Madero, literalmente, se puso en manos de la escritura, se dejó llevar hasta la muerte, hasta casi ir contra sí mismo, por las letras redondas y apretadas, en ocasiones ilegibles, que plasmaba temblorosamente en unas

libretas de hojas rayadas y tapas duras y azules” ‘Madero, literally, put himself in the hands of writing, he let himself be led until death, until he almost went against himself, by the round and tight letters, at times illegible, that were shakily manifested in some blue hardback ruled notebooks’ (“Madero en la historiografía” 42). Furthermore, in researching the leader’s life, Solares begins to notice a shift in his understanding of Madero in light of new discoveries.

Cuando descubrí que Madero era un médium escribiente y cifraba buena parte de sus decisiones—las fundamentales por lo menos—en los dictados de los espíritus, me pareció que había encontrado a un personaje fascinante, casi más literario que meramente histórico. (Solares, “Madero en la historiografía” 42)

When I discovered that Madero was a writing medium and that a good part of his decisions were ciphered—at least the fundamental ones—from the dictations of the spirits, it seemed to me that I had found a fascinating character, almost more literary than historical.

In Madero, el otro, the result of this impressive research, the limits between reality and text are explored and blurred through the allusions to the role of texts, reading, and writing in the leader’s life. Throughout the novel, intertextuality is present on the thematic and symbolic levels. The narrator evokes the works of literature that so influenced Madero: the Vijñāna Bhairava, Tolstoy’s short stories, the Spanish poet José de Espronceda’s poems, among others. Moreover, in various instances the narrator mentions biographies of the president that will be written after his death.

While the mention of the texts that have had an influence on Madero’s worldview serves to give a more complete portrayal of the leader, there is something more at play in these intertextual references. To understand this deeper level, one must have in mind that

one function of the notion of intertextuality is to allude to the paradoxical nature of discursive systems. Discursive conventions can only originate in discourse; everything in la langue, as Saussure says, must have first been

in parole. But parole is made possible by la langue, and if one attempts to identify any utterance or text as a moment of origin one finds that they depend upon prior codes. (Culler, Pursuit 113)

This seemingly circular thinking underscores the fact that “the autonomy of texts is a misleading notion”(Culler, Pursuit 114). Given that discourse must be based on pre-existing discourse, the significance of intertextuality has implications outside of what the conventional idea the influence of existing texts.

By recalling the works that have so influenced Madero, attention is called to the process of influence. Culler posits that

[i]ntertextuality thus becomes less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than a designation of its participation in the discursive space of a culture: the relationship between a text and the various languages or signifying practices of a culture and its relation to those texts which articulate for it the possibilities of that culture. The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts. (Pursuit 114)

The result is that the endless chain of influence—whose origins are forever lost—has repercussions outside of what we call literature. In effect, the constant reminder of intertextuality suggests that Madero—as he is known in the present—is the constantly morphing result of the influence of past discursive codes. Furthermore, by reminding Madero of the texts that will be written about him in the future, the narrator suggests that the narrative with which the reader is engaged is simply one more text in this endless web of influence.

Also revealing is the way the narrative voice obliges Madero to contemplate himself in a mirror which projects images from his life. These images reflect a variety of personal, political, and temporal connections that recreate the key moments in Madero's

personal, spiritual, and political evolution. The novel begins with the narrator addressing Madero using the informal second person conjugation to guide his interlocutor on a journey that begins at the moment of his assassination. The narrative voice refers to his listener as “hermano,” “brother,” a term that does not help in clarifying if the narrator is Madero’s conscious, that of his younger brother who died as a toddler, or a combination of the two. Furthermore, the identity of the narrator is made more ambiguous by the interchangeable usage of the second person pronoun along with the first person singular and plural “yo” and “nosotros.”¹¹ This multiplicity of narrative speakers and listeners is an example of the doubling, reflecting, and multiplying of signs present throughout the novel.

As Madero’s lifeless body lies on the ground, the narrative voice commands his listener: “Quédate ahí, hermano. No te vuelvas hacia la luz. Concéntrate en el momento en que abriste los ojos (pero no los ojos) y a través del velo rojo que hizo caer el estallido del disparo, como párpados de sangre, te descubriste mirándote a ti (a mí) mismo” ‘Don’t move, Brother. Don’t turn to face the light. Concentrate on that moment when you opened your eyes (no longer yours) through the red veil that the gunshot draped on you. Through your blood-filled eyelids, you found yourself looking at yourself (at myself)’ (7). The use of the well-known and (and perhaps clichéd) imagery of the soul transcending toward the light is interrupted by the narrator who demands, “Recuerda la

¹¹ Underscoring the importance of intertextuality in this novel, Martín Camps points out that “[h]ay varias semejanzas entre *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) y *Madero, el otro*, como la utilización de tres pronombres personales para referirse a la misma persona. Es también la historia de un moribundo que participó en la Revolución mexicana. La novela de Fuentes sigue una estética básicamente modernista, mientras la de Solares, presenta rasgos de dominante postmodernista” ‘there are various similarities between the *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) and *Madero, el otro*, such as the usage of three personal pronouns to refer to the same person. It is also the history of a dying man that participated in the Mexican Revolution. While Fuentes’ novel follows a basically modernist aesthetic, Solares’ presents predominately postmodern features’ (17-18).

‘sabiduría del espejo’, que leíste en El Bardo Thodol, uno de tus libros predilectos. Estás solo (tú y yo), el espejo no refleja sino un rostro—contraído por una mueca de dolor— con que el que hablas (hablamos)” ‘Remember the ‘wisdom of the mirror’ that you read about in one of your favorite books, Thodol, the Bard. You are alone (you and I); the mirror reflects only one face—contorted in a grimace of pain—through which you (we) speak’ (8). The mirror of which the narrator speaks becomes a recurring leitmotif, a means through which the narrator forces Madero to contemplate the past, present, and future.

This symbol of reflection in which the causes and effects of Madero’s life are shown before him in cinema-like fashion allows the narrator to probe the leader’s important decisions and questions left unanswered by traditional historiography. In order to better understand how he became the person he is at the moment of his death, Madero is guided by the narrator through various sequences that do not follow any particular temporal order:

El auto-cuestionamiento filosófico es hecho de una manera atemporal, mas no anacrónica, donde las representaciones están más que nada atentas a un ordenamiento del flujo de conciencia entre la voz narrativa y Madero, el otro, que yace en las afueras de la penitenciaría con una bala incrustada en su cerebro. (Martínez 80)

The philosophical self-questioning is made in an atemporal manner, yet not anachronic, where the representations are more than anything subject to the ordering of the stream of consciousness between the narrator and the other Madero who lies in the outskirts of the penitentiary with a bullet lodged in his brain.

Representative of this auto-questioning is the deluge of inquiries the narrator makes in reference to Madero’s relationship with the revolutionary general of the Southern Army, Emiliano Zapata. Torturously, scenes from the on-and-off working relationship between

the two leaders are replayed. The narrator seems to express a desire to explain why he is submitting Madero to these difficult moments. “¿Pero cómo entenderlo sin revivir el inicio de tu relación con él, sin avivar las escenas: altas lenguas de fuego, en el espejo que tienes enfrente?” ‘But how can anyone understand your relationship with Zapata without reliving it from its beginning, without recreating the opening scenes? You can see it now: the tall flames of the fire in the mirror in front of you’ (112). As these scenes appear in the mirror, past, present, and future begin to meld as images come and go and the narrator obliges his interlocutor to understand the implications his decisions have on the world.

Madero’s decisions, as shown in the novel and confirmed by historiography, seem to contradict the more spiritual and pacifist tendencies of which the reader is shown in the narration. In particular, the way in which Madero fights and is wounded in the battle of Casas Grandes is a subject for which the narrator needs more explanation from his listener. “¿Cómo vivió tu alma suave y susceptible los primeros disparos, las primeras escaramuzas entre revolucionarios y federales, los primeros heridos, los primeros muertos [. . .]?” ‘How did your tender and sensitive spirit live through those first shots, the first skirmishes between the Revolutionaries and the Federal soldiers, the first wounded, the first dead [. . .]?’ (172-73). This contradiction between the pacifist beliefs and the bellicose actions of the revolutionary hero gives the impression that Madero has two sides, one public the other private. Interestingly, it is the public side which the narrator suggests is the “otro,” the other Madero, alluded to in the title of the novel. “¿Te asustaba el otro Madero, que habías descubierto en tu fascinación por la acción, en contraste con el de los retiros místico, la meditación y el silencio?” ‘Did the other Madero

scare you, the Madero with a fascination for action, so different from the Madero of mystic retreats, meditation, and silence?’ (140). In his questioning, the narrator gives the impression of being incapable of completely digesting much of the very information he presents.

The side of Madero that became so apparent while rallying troops at Casas Grandes is that with which he has been identified in most post-Revolution historiography. However, the narrator seems incredulous and confused trying to reconcile these contradictory versions of a single man. Asking his interlocutor at what moment he made the change into the other Madero, the narrator suddenly sees a multiplicity of images in the mirror. “Cuándo, en qué momento empezaste a ser ese otro que ahora, mira, puedes descubrir en el espejo difusamente, no de frente sino más bien como si lo (te) miraras de espaldas, como si lo miraras a través de espejos paralelos” ‘ When did you begin to be that other? Look, there it is now, the image is vague and cloudy, but you can make it out in the mirror if you do not look straight at it, but rather as though you were seeing it (you) from the back, as if you were holding up a second mirror to the first, seeing the reflection of a reflection’ (173). While the two mirrors opposing each other suggest two images, one must keep in mind that in each mirror there is a reproduction of the image that faces it. The result is an infinite reproduction of images, each one slightly different from the other. Clearly, the endless series is a visual manifestation of a theme present throughout the novel: a multifaceted Madero that belies the traditional understanding of the man. The question that one must ask is what the underlying purpose of this multiplication of images is. Perhaps the answer lies in the evolution of the manner in which Madero has traditionally been portrayed in Mexican historiography.

Martínez suggests that in Madero, el otro “Solares expone la problemática de la mistificación de los personajes históricos por parte de un público expectativo, en este caso específico, el pueblo mexicano” ‘Solares exposes the problem of the mistification of historical personages by an expectant audience, in this specific case, that of the Mexican people’ (79). While this statement is certainly valid, it is a bit naive to think that the image of Madero as a selfless revolutionary is an innocent assignation simply conferred by everyday Mexicans. Emiliano Florescano posits that the formation of the public identity of Madero and other leaders of the Revolution is part of a process in which political and personal complexities are dissolved given that

en la década siguiente al movimiento armado, Obregón y los sucesivos gobernantes iniciaron la mitificación del pasado inmediato, elaboraron una separación irreducible entre el régimen de la dictadura y el advenimiento de la revolución liberadora; borraron las oposiciones que habían separado a Madero de Carranza, y a éste de Obregón, y oscurecieron las más pronunciadas contradicciones que enfrentaron a estos tres líderes con Villa y Zapata; se asumieron, en el discurso, defensores de las causas campesinas y proletarias, y promovieron un culto a la revolución y sus héroes que mitificó el proceso revolucionario. (132)

in the decade following armed movement, Obregón and the subsequent rulers began the mystification of the immediate past. They elaborated an irreducible separation between the dictatorial regime and the accession of the liberating revolution; they erased the oppositions that had separated Madero from Carranza, and the latter from Obregón. They fogged the most pronounced contradictions that these three leaders faced with Villa and Zapata. They took on, in their discourse, the role of defenders of the causes of the peasants and the proletariat and promoted a cult to the revolution and its heroes mystified by the revolutionary process.

It must be said be said that there is nothing revolutionary in this process of mystifying heroes of a revolution. As Florescano points out, “[l]a mitificación y conversión del pasado revolucionario en fundamento político de sus herederos, es un proceso común a todos los gobiernos cuya legitimidad se hace descansar en la disrupción revolucionaria”

‘the mystification and conversion of the revolutionary past in the political foundation of its inheritors is a common process in all governments whose legitimacy rests on revolutionary disruption’ (132). Of particular interest in this study is the problematic process of mystifying the recent past. As Florescano shows, epic distance, so necessary in converting Madero the man into Madero the mythical hero, needs not be solely temporal in nature.

As if to eliminate epic distancing, the narrator continually guides the reader and his interlocutor back to the narrative present. “Pero no olvides que tu cuerpo está ahí, al lado del sedan Protos negro, y la pistola del mayor Cárdenas aún humea. Por eso, continúa mirando (mirándonos) y recuerda el momento anterior y luego el otro anterior, siempre hacia atrás, hacia el inicio, lo que es para ti, en estos momentos, la única forma de avanzar” ‘But don’t forget that your body is lying there, next to the black Protos sedan, and that Major Cárdenas’s pistol is still smoking. That’s why you have to keep looking (looking at us), and remember the previous moment, and the one before that, always going back towards the beginning, which for you, in these moments, is the only way to move forward’ (80). The narrator’s words seem to be not only a command to Madero but also to the reader and the Mexican public as well. The consequence of the contemplation of the past allows Madero and the reader to overcome some obstacle that prevents “mov[ing] forward” toward a state of transcendence.

However, in order to achieve the transcendence that can only come from a thorough understanding of his life, the narrator reminds Madero, “no te detengas en una sola imagen: podrías después no salir de ella. Aquí, como en un sueño, como en cualquier sueño, surgen imágenes que intentan fijarse, permanecer en ti para siempre” ‘do

not stop on a single image. You could become trapped in it. Here, as in a dream, as in any dream, images rise that try to trap you, to keep you forever' (193). As a result of this suggestion, it becomes apparent that movement from image to image becomes the necessary means through which Madero must escape spending eternity within one moment from his life. To contrast the idea of movement, the narrator reminds Madero of the time he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, an idea of which the American ambassador to Mexico (and future co-conspirator in his assassination) Henry Lane Wilson approved: "Oh, no hay que preocuparse. Al señor Madero lo llevarán a un manicomio, que es en donde siempre debió haber estado..." 'Oh, don't worry about him. They'll take him off to an insane asylum where he has always belonged anyway' (242). The concepts of movement and transcendence are contrasted by the narrator when he threatens the possibility of remaining trapped in a memory few would want to recall. "Si quieres imaginar el infierno—pero recuerda que al imaginarlo lo vuelves real—mírate internado en un manicomio bajo la terapia exhaustiva del doctor Lane Wilson, afamado psiquiatra" 'If you want to imagine what hell would be (but don't forget that imagining something makes it real), imagine yourself confined to an insane asylum under the exhaustive therapeutic care of Doctor Lane Wilson, the famous psychiatrist' (242). Apart from the personal tragedy of being trapped in an asylum, the narrator suggests that the real hell for Madero would be to remain in one image, a static moment of the president's dynamic life.

A large part of the characterizations and images of Madero found in the novel center mostly on how the leader's political development and decision making. However according to the narrative voice, these considerations pail in comparison to what is most

important to Madero himself. Reminding his listener of the tragic death of his little brother Gustavo, the narrator states, “[p]ero, finalmente, ninguna culpa es comparable a la que te provoca recordar la muerte de tu hermano Gustavo. Los cuerpos unánimes colgados en la ristra de árboles, los cientos de miles de muertes que desatará tu muerte misma, se desvanecen—anónimas—en la memoria, ante esa sola imagen calcinante” ‘[i]n the final analysis there is no guilt that can compare to what you feel when you remember how your brother Gustavo died. The string of motionless bodies hanging from the rows of trees, the hundreds of thousands of deaths that your own death will unleash, they all vanish—anonymous—in your memory before the single burning image of Gustavo’s death’ (33). In the course of bringing up these memories of a difficult childhood, the narrator humanizes Madero, reminding the reader of the tragedies that helped to form the leader.

Many contemporary portrayals of Madero in Mexican historiography have been built upon the needs of various actors with much at stake in the process. One of these actors is Madero’s own family who, upon his death, hid and destroyed aspects of his life that they believed would be viewed as unfavorable by the Mexican public. In particular, the narrator asks Madero about his problematic spiritual beliefs. “¿Qué podía pensar un caballero de la fe católica de tus prácticas espíritas? ¿Y por eso tu familia esconderá tus libretas con los comunicados de los espíritus como un testimonio vergonzante de tu historia, de la historia de tu país?” ‘What would a Knight of the Catholic Faith think about your spiritist practices? And is this the same reason that your family will later hide your notebooks filled with communications dictated by the spirits? Because they are embarrassing evidence of your history, of your country’s history?’ (105). The ways

Madero's family sought to protect their reputation and that of the assassinated president is telling in that it reveals the ways in which history is manipulated.

Through his questioning the narrator in Madero, el otro informs his interlocutor and the reader of how the actions of others can obscure historical knowledge. In contrast, in novels like Madero, el otro the process of narrating their unique version history is laid bare. Hutcheon reminds us that in historiographic metafiction

[t]he narrativization of past events is not hidden; the events no longer seem to speak for themselves, but are shown to be consciously composed into a narrative, whose constructed—not found—order is imposed upon them, often overtly by the narrating figure. The process of making stories out of chronicles, of constructing plots out of sequences, is what postmodern fiction underlines. This does not in any way deny the existence of the past real, but it focuses attention on the act of imposing order on that past, of encoding strategies of meaning-making through representation. (Politics 66-67)

In using this common characteristic, the narrative voice in Madero, el otro constructs the past, always from the position of a present, making transparent to the reader that the narrativization of history is never a neutral exercise.

In a telling moment of how history will be written in the future, the narrative voice once again calls Madero to attention. Foretelling an event yet to occur at the time of his death, the narrator guides his listener to what will perhaps be his last image before transcending to the state on which he meditated frequently. “Busca otra [imagen], quizás años más adelante. Ésa, por ejemplo, de noviembre de 1914. Villa, Ángeles y Zapata y muchísima gente más ante tu tumba, en el Panteón Francés” ‘Look for a different image, perhaps something from years later. For example, in November 1914 when Villa, Ángeles, Zapata and many others gathered at your graveside at the French Cemetery (244). In this last scene the narrator reproduces Pancho Villa's eulogy before Madero's

tomb, in which the general states that “[e]l señor Madero fue hombre bueno” ‘Mr. Madero was a good man’ and that “[a]unque así fue, hubo unos malos hijos de México que lo traicionaron y lo asesinaron” ‘[u]nfortunately, Mexico had its bad children who betrayed him and assassinated him’ (244). While true, the most telling part of Villa’s speech is that he admits that “pues no solo murió el señor Madero por obra de sus enemigos, sino por la mala ayuda o la mucha culpa de sus amigos, que a todos nosotros nos alcanza” ‘Mr. Madero’s death was not only the result of what his enemies did, but also the result of what his friends, including us, did not do, and so, we are just as guilty’ (245). Villa’s admittance to culpability through inaction in the assassination of the president glosses over the dramatic differences between the men gathered at Madero’s tomb and the leader for whom they grieve.

This imagery does indeed offer some form of vindication for the ideals of Madero. Perhaps in a sympathetic gesture, the narrator states, “[q]uédate con esa última imagen, hermano: Villa, Ángeles y Zapata llorando, los tres, ante tu tumba” ‘[l]et this be your last image, Brother: Villa, Ángeles, and Zapata, the three of them together, crying at your grave’ (244-45). Nonetheless, this image also highlights that the march of time and history has already begun. Political distinctions are blurred, former rivals are placed together, and fact and fiction begin to meld into one narrative known as history. As the narrator explains the scene at the grave of Madero, it becomes clear that such a singular moment has an enormous impact on the present and future. However, it must be pointed out that the past, as understood through history, is also being created in that present. Carlos Fuentes observes this phenomenon when he states that “[v]ivimos hoy. Mañana tendremos una imagen de lo que fue el presente. No podemos ignorar esto, como no

podemos ignorar que el pasado fue vivido, que el origen del pasado es el presente” ‘we live today. Tomorrow we will have an image of what was the present. We cannot be unaware of this, just like we cannot be unaware that the past was lived, that the origin of the past is the present’ (Valiente 18). Like the reader can observe in the scene at Madero’s tomb, the past is constantly being renewed and revived and reconstructed in the present.

Perhaps it is for this reason the narrator repeatedly connects the past, present, and future as he explains the interconnectivity between Madero and his fellow Mexicans. Speaking of the violence that Madero’s assassination will usher in, the narrative voice questions the value of the leader’s ideals and dreams. “Por defender y realizar un sueño parecido—¿el mismo sueño?—morirán millones de hombres en los años siguientes, y aún más y más después. Casi, la humanidad toda irá detrás de ese sueño de libertad del loco Madero” ‘In order to defend and fulfill a similar dream—or is it the same dream?—millions of men will die in the years to come, and still more and more afterwards. Almost the whole of humankind will pursue that dream of freedom, madman Madero’s dream of freedom’ (247). While the words seem to mock Madero and all he stood for, the reality is that in many ways Madero’s dreams became ideals which sparked a true change in Mexico. Nonetheless, the political, economic, and social realities of 20th- and 21st-century Mexico fall quite short of the dreams Madero had for his nation.

In reaching a state of transcendence, Madero’s soul moves from earthly concerns such as the nation and political struggles to a place of tranquility reminiscent of the attic in his family’s hacienda. As the novel draws to a close, the narrator informs Madero that he has reached a safe place in communion with something greater than himself. “Mira,

¿lo ves?, aquí, en este sencillo tapanco has logrado abolir la muerte y lo puedes ver: eres todos nosotros y tú mismo, y estás en donde, desde siempre, tenías que haber estado”

‘Look, do you see? Here, in this very attic, you have managed to transcend death, and you can see the truth: you are all of us, and you are also yourself. You are where you always had to be from the beginning and forever’ (247). These words reflect the spiritual beliefs of Madero about an afterlife, but also underscore one of the most important themes in the novel: the interconnectivity between Madero and others. In this moment the narrator’s usage of multiple pronouns begins to seem more logical as the voice reminds Madero, “you are all of us, and you are also yourself” (247). For Madero, the spiritual was always tied to the earthly. In the case of Madero, el otro these connections are made manifest in these last words of the narrative voice. Symbolically, Madero is inseparable from all Mexicans. He is as much a part of their identity as any other politician. His words still are repeated and his life is constantly constructed anew.

The past is never directly accessible to us; in Madero, el otro it is relived through the guiding voice of the narrator and the images in the mirror. This narrative process mimics that of historiography as it selects and discards information in order to form a coherent narration. It is no coincidence that in writing Madero, el otro Ignacio Solares researched the extensive documentation that exists on the Mexican leader. Nonetheless, as Solares admits in the “Note,” the more truthful history can be found somewhere between imagination and reality. It is in this intervalo, this interval, where history is created and Madero lives on.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions

La mayoría de las acciones humanas no terminan nunca, ni tienen un tiempo y un espacio delimitados, no se acaban con la muerte de un individuo ni concluyen al cerrar la última página de un libro. Se puede querer borrar de la memoria un suceso o a una persona, como a Hernán Cortés, sin embargo, de hacerlo así, estaríamos eliminando parte de nosotros mismos. Al tener memoria del pasado formamos parte de ese pasado y nos proyectamos hacia el futuro. (Adame 276)

The majority of human actions never end, nor do they have a defined space and time. They do not end with the death of an individual nor do they conclude when the last page of a book is closed. You can want to erase an event or a person, like Hernán Cortés, from your memory, but by doing this, we would be eliminating part of ourselves. By having memory of the past we form part of that past and we project ourselves toward the future.

What are we to make of the mad ravings of the Empress Carlota, of la Malinche and Hernán Cortés in present-day Mexico City, of the threatening specter of Pancho Villa, and the shimmering images from Francisco Madero's life? Each primary work in this study wrestles with the meaning of history in the present. Through very distinct styles and approaches, these texts all reflect the interconnectivity of past events and

personages with contemporary Mexico. Similar in many ways to conventional historical reproduction, the novels Noticias del imperio and Madero, el otro are products of painstaking historiographic research and literary imagination. However, unlike traditional historical novels, these texts do not propose a factual retelling of a distant past. Rather, they seek to open up a dialogue about the effects of history in the present. In the plays La Malinche and Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda, the anachronistic placement of past personages and the repetition of historic scenarios illustrate how the past continues to have direct influence on the present. There is dialectic interplay between past and present in all of the primary works in this study. It is through this dialogue—a laying bare of obscure discursive practices—that the reader is able to understand truly the ways the past operates in the present.

I began this work by mentioning the tragic events of the Tlatelolco Massacre of October 2, 1968. Returning to the Plaza of Tlatelolco and the small marker commemorating the massacred, it is easy to lose oneself among the imposing structures, monuments built in the service of the powerful of Mexico's turbulent past. It is also easy not to notice life passing by in the form of honking car horns, children with balloons, businesswomen with briefcases, or a young man selling compact discs of the latest popular hits. In other words, it is easy to forget the humanity of the present while imagining the events of the past.

In this study I have often used the terms “past” and “present,” not in the cosmic sense of temporality, but rather in how time is experienced by societies and individuals. Although this could be seen as a rhetorical and symbolic exercise, these terms are anything but meaningless. It is not strange to hear an American tourist in Mexico say, “It

is like taking a step back in time.” This politically charged statement says much more about the tourist’s feelings of superiority to the Other than any temporal observation. Johannes Fabian warns us that “[i]n short, *geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*” (144; emphasis in original). The belief that the Other is living in some inferior version of the past in relation to one’s present has doubtlessly launched countless wars and has led to much human suffering.

Carlos Fuentes says that “[i]n Mexico, all times are living, all pasts are present” (New Time 16). I believe he is making a statement similar to the arguments put forth in all of the primary works of this study: that we are constantly engaged with the past. This is not a Mexican reality; it is a human reality. The past has an effect on us, but as we try to understand and reconstruct that past, we conversely have an effect on it as mediated through the human consciousness. This is why it would be preposterous to argue that the anachronistic presence of the characters in the primary works in this study is a reflection of physical reality. Rather, it is an exploration of the power we vest in the past, how the human mind has the ability to expand and collapse perceived temporal distances.

In the primary works of literature in this study, there is a clear dialogue between past and present. Throughout these novels and plays, the past is shown to be much more than a distant foundation for the present. The past is constantly being renewed, reexamined, redefined, and revised. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize that while the past does influence the present, the present also influences the past. The dialectical relationship between past and present can be observed in Carlota’s understanding of history that, in spite of her madness, is not very different from our own. Our influence on the past can be heard in La Malinche’s plea to her children to be freed from a dangerous

patriarchal political discourse. It can be felt as the audience cheers and uncomfortably laughs at the impotent and disarmed Pancho Villa. We read in wonder as another Madero that we never knew existed is revealed in the last moments of life. These works of Mexican Historiographic Metaliterature offer a new understanding of temporality, historiography, and the human experience. They resonate with the reader and public because they shed light on a truth seldom explored outside of literature—the past is indeed present.

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